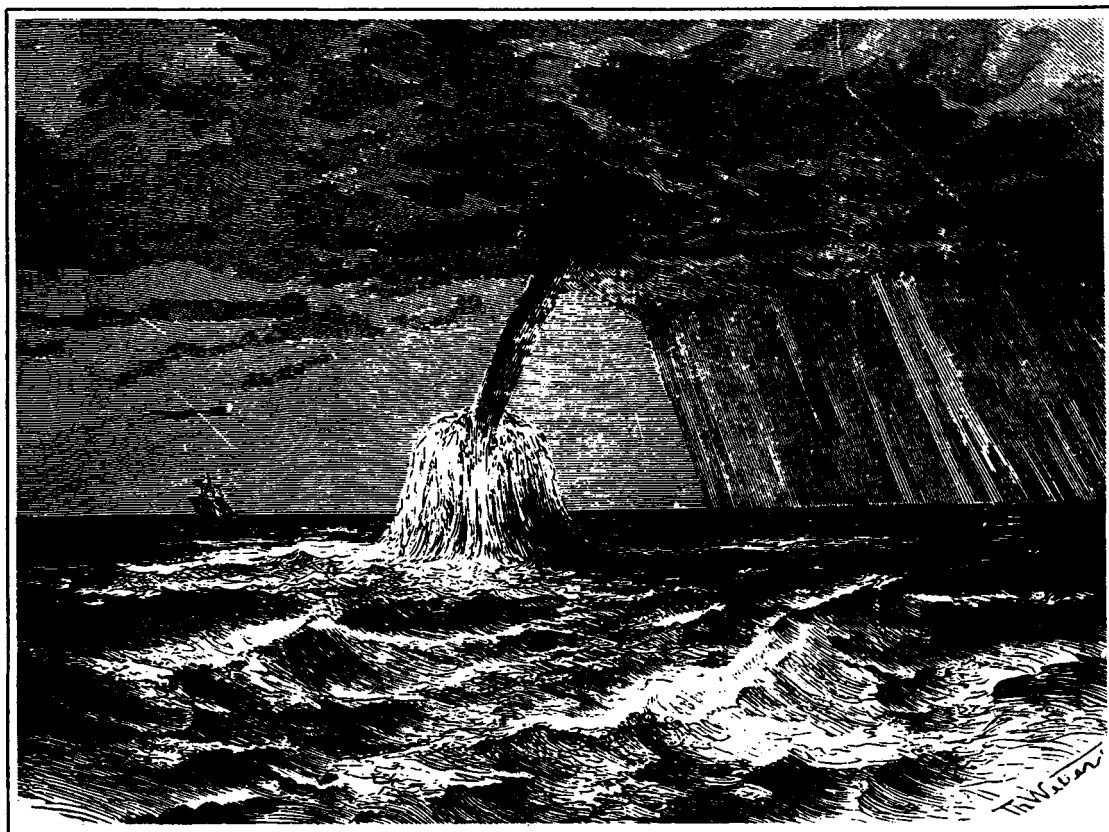
a miscellany of fortean curiosities

The News

BUMPER 'FALL' ISSUE - falls of : bricks, p7.. stones, p9.. ice, p10.. animals, p15



WATERSPOUTS IN THE ENGLISH CHANNEL p17

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THE NEWS

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A GREAT FORTEAN CAPER.

As you will see from the attendant notes, Ken Campbell's play, 'The Great Caper' opens at the Royal Court Theatre, early October. Ken is one of us - a Fortean, that is - and his love and fascination with the Fortean mysteries shines through. It concerns the adventures of a hardened Fortean and his companion, who decide, (rightly or wrongly, it doesn't matter), that the bewildered young man they find immobilised by shock in the street is "at this moment carrying, or preparing, a sperm of mind-blowing significance"; and convinced that wonderful phenomena will attend its moment of fertilization, set out to find the perfect girl for him. Most of the Fortean stuff is brought into their constant chattering and asides: curious meteors; plagues of fleas; Adamski's UFOs and UFO kidnappings; a Lost Tribe of Israel; the Tarot; a descendant of the Benjamin Bathurst who "Walked around the Horses"; aerial sounds and strange clouds. Phew! Lord knows what the uninitiated will make of that lot. Sensibly, it's not laboured into heavy suet, but moves at a pace through some good jokes to its lusty conclusion. Some might take offence at some of the language - but that is an accepted norm these days. No deep philosophical discussions here - just an honest-to-Fort ribald romp through the BOOK OF THE DAMNED.

Only later - much thought comes on our susceptibility to control from 'Outside', on the ease with which super-beings from other times or places could manipulate the 'coincidences' of our daily lives to suit the ends of their alien morality.

Cont/ p23.

ROYAL COURT THEATRE

Sloane Square, London SW1. Phone: 01-730 1745.

* * *

Warren Mitchell in THE GREAT CAPER; a visionary drama in 2 acts, by Ken Campbell. Directed by Nicholas Wright; Designed by Bob Ringwood. With: Katie Allan, Judith Blake, Ken Campbell, Simon Coady, Eddie Davies, Aharon Ipalé, Lisa Harrow, Mark Jones, Richard O'Callaghan.

* * *

Previews from 2nd October - 100 best seats @ £1.20
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INCREASES IN SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1) From this issue on, including renewals, the UK rate will be increased to £2.10, the US rate to $6.00 - all other countries to the equivalent of the US rate. We're sure you appreciate that recent world-wide events have pushed up costs all round, and that this increase was inevitable.

2) We regret further having to ask all overseas subscribers who pay by cheque to add 10% to cover the commission taken by the banks who clear the cheque during the payment transaction. In several cases we have finally received only just over half of what you intended us to receive. You might investigate the 'Airmail Transfer' system from your bank direct to ours (details up top on our colophon) - but don't forget to let us know its coming through.

3) All renewals received to date will be honoured - and if any of you kind-hearted souls want to make up the difference to the new rate, this will be most gratefully accepted. But all renewals must from now on be at the new rate. That's life!

4) From this issue we adopt a different system of keeping track of subscriptions. The number printed in the top right-hand corner of your address lable, is the issue number with which your sub. expires. To those of you who throw away your envelopes, or have done so by the time you read our reminder, renew anyway and keep well ahead.

animal curiosities

A CAT THAT'S BATS.

One of the more bizarre sections of John Keel's STRANGE CREATURES FROM TIME AND SPACE. is his chapter 4 on 'Flying Felines', in which he gives accounts of five 'winged' cats, all in the USA. We were recently sent a note from Weekend, 23-29 Jan 74, which tells the story of Thomas Bessie, a regionally famous winged cat in Yorkshire. It was born in a Leeds workhouse in 1900, and vanished from there after gaining some fame. The workhouse official, William Markham, eventually tracked it down in a fairground peepshow, and after some years it died of poisoning and was duly stuffed. When Markham died, the curiosity passed to his granddaughter, Mrs Amy Clague, who has since displayed Thomas Bessie in the various pubs she and her husband have run in Selby, Yorks, including her present one, The Hole in the Wall.

In this case the cat's 'wings' are said to be malformations of its rib structure - though Keel's items are afflicted with variables from twin lumps of thick matted fur to boneless but gristly furry flaps each nine inches long. The only mention of such sports being able to fly is in what seems to us a rather suspect report by Jean Revers of Ontario,(Keel) who saw a winged cat 'sailing' after a neighbour's cat: "It screamed like hell. And it tried to get away by making gliding jumps of fifty or sixty feet - wings extended - after a good running start. It could stay a foot or so above the ground." It was later exhumed (Revers had shot and buried it) and it was found to be "just an ordinary cat" with "growths of thick matted fur". (Credit: Anthony Smith.)

HUNTS FOR VARIOUS CREATURES.

Moby Buffalo? - Fish and Game officials are mounting a hunt, paid for by the Izaak Walton League of America, for a rare albino bison. Records show that 11 others have either failed to survive the Alaska winter, or fallen prey to poachers. Champaign News Gazette (Urbana, Illinois) 31 Oct 73. Credit: Loren Coleman.

The Beast of Bungoma Dies. - The monster that terrorized the Bungoma district 300 miles west of Nairobi, Kenya, killing hundreds of farm animals, was finally trapped and shot by a massive hunt by forestry Rangers. We suspect this to be one of those inquiry-stoppers, that crop up to allay the fears of the superstitious peasants, and expect that we shall shortly hear of continued depredations. This story by the way seems to be an attempt to ease the fears by villagers of a supernatural beast, a mixture of "lion, leopard and dog" which in turn makes it a probable continuation of the 'Sinister Force' reported from Kenya earlier (see NEWS 4 p3). The Rangers, in this case, said it was nothing more than a "huge and ferocious leopard." Daily Mirror 24 April 74. Credit: Steve Moore.

Campaign against Killer Wolves. - Two children were killed and another badly injured within two weeks after wolf attacks in the Orense province of Spain. Massive hunts with dogs and poisoned bait have been planned. San Francisco Chronicle 12 July 74. Credit: Loren Coleman. A note in the Sunday Mirror 14 July, mentions only one wolf.

See item in Mark Hall's column for a wave of uncharacteristic coyote attacks in New Mexico.

Lion running Amok. - Nothing unusual, you might think, in a lion killing animals in South Africa, and yet those who live there say this is not lion country and they are unable to discover where it has come from. Wolf van der Merwe told reporters: "Being a big game hunter I recognised the tracks of a lion in soft mud. I could not believe my eyes, but when I saw the half-eaten carcases of two of my heifers, I had no further doubts." A police search was carried out, but apparently failed to turn up anything. Los Angeles Times 7 April 74. Credit: Mark Hall.

MYSTERY ANIMALS IN UK.

The Mystery Animal phenomenon (MA) has a long and chequered history in the UK, from the Black Dog ghosts of old to the modern 'Surrey Puma' through the 'wolf' hunts of 1904/5 chronicled by Fort in LO! In this issue Nigel Watson covers some info. about the Black Dogs, and coming shortly we have an article from Janet Bord relating a very curious Black Dog ghost story. Please see the current INFO 13 for a review of MA phenomena in the southern counties from 1962 - 1973 by your present editor. Often,when the press note the arrival of an MA, the Zoos are checked for escaped animals - so perhaps we ought to carry notes of escapes, though we are dubious about its value, since the escape that tallies with an MA is very rare indeed, and there is no accounting for private and illegal importings of associated critters - but we'll see what comes up.

PUMA HUNT...IN SCOTLAND.

A 401b American Puma is believed to be roaming Ayrshire. Sharpshooters and police are standing by for the next sighting. No information is given about the 'several' previous sightings, and there have been no reports (that have come to our notice) of any killing of livestock - always an odd feature. Pumas are big eaters, and as in the 'Surrey' cases,killing of various domestic and wild animals for food seems to be unusually low - that is unless it's something else, or even non-corporeal. The only clue to its origin is that a 'mystery caller' to the RSPCA asked to have the teeth of his puma pulled, but failed to reveal his identity. Its thought he (presuming he was in Scotland) turned the damned thing loose.

Conversely, in the matter of killed evidence, is the case of the 'Emmaville Panther', Australia's answer to the 'Surrey Puma'. We don't think this has seen daylight before, so we duly note the report of a hunt for same by 50 crack riflemen after killing "hundreds of sheep" and even worse, "scaring tourists away." Sunday Express 2 March 69. Credit: Peter Rogerson.

THE GAME WAR HOTS UP.

In NEWS 3 we gave you the latest (and some of them were quite late) dispatches in the hostilities between bird and man , and though things have not yet reached Hitchcock proportions, they are definitely getting more blatant in the wing and beak department, not to mention their unsophisticated but effective software.

We have just dug out a batch while making a feeble and useless attempt to sort out our files - and we come across one note of flocks of magpies dive-bombing MPs as they leave the Australian Houses of Parliament, Canberra. One MP is reported to have had his ear sliced; another was pecked on the head; and a third was said to have been knocked down before fleeing to a nearby temple. A suggestion has been made to issue safety hats, and they'd be well advised to take that up. Birmingham Evening Mail 27 Oct 67. Another attack by magpies who managed to pin down a workman, teachers and children in a school in Adelaide, South Australia, is recorded in Daily Mirror for 19 Aug 71. Credit: Anthony Smith. It hardly makes it any more believable to learn that this feat took only two of the birds, and yet the siege was maintained until police came and shot them.

Magpies again figure in the story of an attack on a 3-year-old girl, in Ettymore Close, Sedgeley, Staffs, as she played with other children. The bird, thought to have been a pet at one time, swooped, scratching her arm and leg. It flew away when the other children started screaming. Birmingham Evening Mail 4 Aug 71. But no one knew where a vulture, perched in a tree near Taunton, Somerset, came from. Not even the Zoos owned up to this one. It sat in that tree glaring balefully for 42 hours at the house of Mrs Roger Sleap. Perhaps it knew something she didn't - we presume it went after this for there is no further news. Daily Mirror 3 Sept 69. Credit:A Smith

Perhaps the vulture was an advance scout for the bird Demolition Corps getting ahead of the action for we have no casualties as yet. But in 1971 we have a couple of attacks. At Dover, Kent, a motorcyclist and his girl passenger were attacked by a seagull in the market square. The girl was taken to hospital for treatment after being pecked on the cheek. Daily Mirror 1 June 71. Credit: Anthony Smith. Then we hear of a "huge black crow with evil, staring eyes" that has terrorised the Yorkshire town of Dodworth, near Barnsley. It perches on a garage roof and swoops to attack, frightening children from two schools; attacking a 17-year-old girl, and a 12-year-old who beat it off with a chain; bitten a woman's fingers, and sent a man fleeing over a wall. Mrs Agnes Audin, whose daughter had to be treated for shock after a flutter, said: "It's a really huge crow with a wicked looking beak and evil, staring eyes. It dive-bombs anyone who goes past." Her daughter said: "It tried to land on my head. I tried to fight it off with my handbag, but it attacked me again and again as I ran off. I was absolutely terrified. At first people regarded the tales as a joke, but now no one will go near the lane." Police were said to be "looking into the matter", and the only help an RSPCA man could give was for someone to entice it into a shed and lock the door since killing birds is prohibited. Sunday Express 21 Nov 71. Again, we have heard nothing more of what happened next.

Nearer to the present time is a cutting from Mark Hall, about a male redwing blackbird that haunts the second tee of the Maquoketa County Club golf course in Iowa. He waits for humans to tee up, then dives out of the sun. "He's a pretty smart bird. He'll just sit there on the telephone line, and as soon as you turn your back, Boom! he's gotcha - right in the middle of the back." said club manager Ken Simmons. Des Moines (Iowa) Register 15 June 74. Credit: Mark Hall. And lastly, for now, we have the boldest attack yet. Aflock of crows, no doubt fed up with these ironbirds that chew up their brothers around airports, set about a three-seater plane still in flight, damaging its engine and forcing it to make an emergency landing. The plane came down at Maiquetia airport, Venezuela, with the birds still in pursuit. The plane's three occupants emerged shaken but unhurt. Saf Francisco Chronicle 18 July 74. · Credit: Loren Coleman.

Next issue we shall have a selection of stories about the more friendly engagements, mainly on the part of animals, not birds, who seem to have gone out of their way to rescue people and nice things like that.

egnarts

WHITE INDIAN TRIBE IN AMAZON JUNGLE.

If this story received any coverage in the UK press, it failed to come to our attention one way or another. A tribe of fair-haired, pale-skinned, blue-eyed Indians have been contacted and named after the Ipixuna river which runs through their 'territory' to meet the Xingu, itself a tributary of the mighty 'ocean-river' Amazon. From Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) came an announcement that this portentious discovery was made by Raimundo Alives in December last year, and despite his detailed report with colour photos, FUNAI had not released the news because of their own scepticism. They dispatched an expedition under Helio Rocha, Commissioner of Amazon Affairs, (a nice name for someone responsible for contact with new tribes: "Helio there, new tribes! We bring you Civilisation.), and a professional anthropologist to check out Alives's story. Alives had met only eight of the tribe, swimming in the Ipixuna, and though they spoke a completely strange language, it was established that there were about a hundred more back in the jungle. They appear to have very primitive customs; do not wear clothes; and have few ornaments. Meanwhile FUNAI have assigned more staff to study the new tribe, and prefer silence until they have some conclusions.

"The phenomena may be explained by the presence of whitemen in remote times, who might have stay-

ed there and mixed with the Indian population," said Rocha. But Alives preferred another theory: "Despite the colour difference, they may belong to the Acurini group, which holds to common customs and lives in the same area. One of the white women we met was carrying her child in a roughly woven cotton sling - rudimentary cotton weaving is a technique peculiar to the Acurinis." Sources: San Francisco Chronicle, 2 Feb & 3 June 74; Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Journal, 1 June 74; Los Angeles Times, 2 June 74; Rochester (Minn.) Post-Bulletin, 10 July 74; Minneapolis (Minn.) Star, 19 July 74. Credit: Loren Cloeman, Mark Hall.

It won't be long, we feel, before we get claims identifying them as a 'Lost Tribe of Israel', or as degenerate survivors of the chauffeurs and mechanics of the Hot Rods of the Gods; St. Brendan/Quetzalcoatl's returning colonizers blown off course. But FUNAI have weathered such mysteries before, it seems - in 1973, a group of their workers found a tribe using pots and pans stamped "Made in the People's Republic of China." !!!

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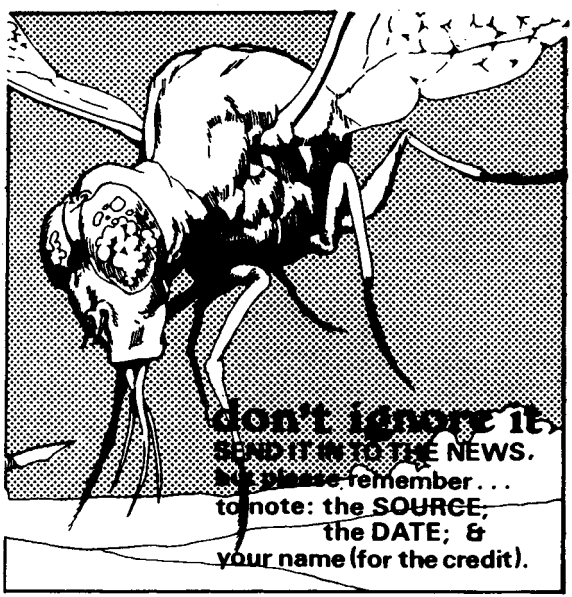


'ARK'-EOLOGY IN A TURKISH BIZARRE.

The Silly Season they call it - the Press whoops with joy and descends en masse on some unsuspecting madness. The morning of 23 Feb - the sussuration of eyebrows going up at the breakfast-table - crazy Yanks out hunting the Ark - but there it was.

The Daily Mail told of Senator Frank Moss telling the Senate Space Committee (of which he is Chairman) that the Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS) had photographed, from 450 miles out, some foreign matter, 14,000 ft up the NE side of Mt. Ararat near the Turkish/Russian border. "It's about the right size and shape to be the Ark," he said, leaving us wondering how he can be so sure about such things. Further identification would be forthcoming, he added, when photos from Skylab 3 were eventually processed - though in the coverage during the following weeks, not a mention is given to the Skylab 'proof'. The Daily Mail does not mention Dr. Montgomery. (1) In the Daily Express virtually identical statements are made but credited to Dr John Montgomery, a divinity professor, who, it is said, will lead an expedition to recover pieces of Noah's bad parking. No mention of Senator Moss. (2). If Dr Montgomery looks like making a fool of himself, at least he will be a qualified fool, since he is given a pedigree - no less than 7 degrees and 14 books are cited as evidence that if he's taking it seriously there must be something in it.

The US coverage was wider and deeper. A month later, Henry Morris, of Creation Research Institute, California, announced his intention to race for the Ark; the first expedition, he says, since one led by RE Crawford and Fernand Navarra in 1969, in which some ancient timbers were found preserved in a glacier. (3). And the Turkish Government steps in, proclaiming that from now on they will ban, for security reasons, tourist visits to the Ararat area. Since Morris claimed to already have his permit, the odds are going up for Dr Montgomery. (4).

After more weeks of silence, there is a flurry of activity. Much has been going on behind the scenes. According to an article by Russel Chandler, six more groups have declared their intentions, scrabbling to get permits. He interviewed Eryl Cummings, "grand old man of arkeology", who talked of 31 assaults on Ararat since 1961, seven of which included himself, and two, Dr Montgomery. (5). And there had at least been one in 1960, when an American team returned bearing only conflicting interpretations of a boat-shaped depression that some less romantic (or disillusioned) searcher attributed solely to fortuitous landslides. And Fort even recorded that upon 25 April 1892, Archdeacon Nouri climbed Ararat in the hope that he would find something. Fort comments that he did indeed find something. Exactly what, is not detailed, so you will have to look up 'English Mechanic, 56-184'. (6).

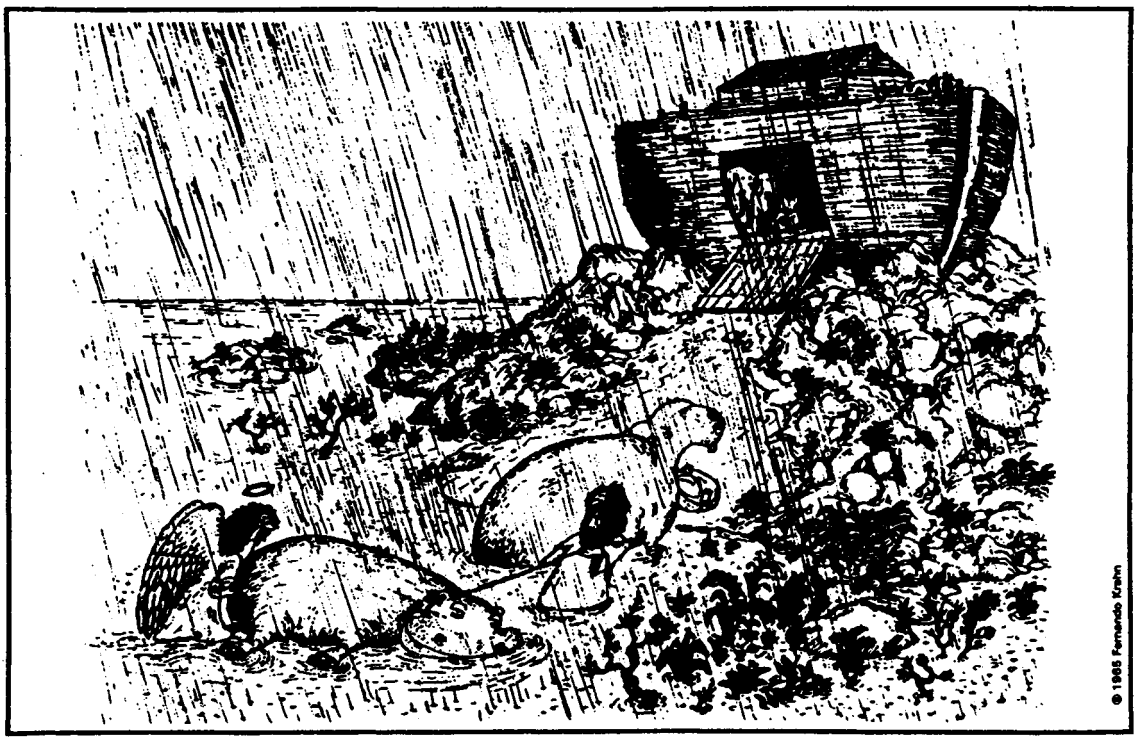
The most vociferous of the eight groups out to vindicate the Old Testament, is one led by Tom Crotser. His envoys in Turkey were said to be arranging their fifth trip. On one of the previous trips, he said, they found pieces of 'gopher wood' which were carbon-dated to "4 or 5 thousand years old. Man, there's 70,00 tons of gopherwood up there." (7). He then plans to turn a mere triumph into an ultimate demolition job on the credibility of modern science, by trekking 400 miles away to Mt Nimrud, where he will discover the Tower of Babel. (8). "The greatest discovery of the age will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Bible is totally true." (9). The devoutly Moslem Turks are not amused to a man. They stress in early July: "We have not given permission yet to any group, and we do not intend to do so." - So there! (10).

Quite apart from questions of if and when there ever was an Ark, in the Biblical form or not; and irrespective of conclusive and conflicting evidence for the Biblical Flood, either local or universal (in 2000BC, as Dr Albright maintains (5)); and despite any identification of what the Bible calls 'gopher-wood', and the acknowledged vagaries of the carbon-dating techinique, etc; and (most damning of all) ignoring the more ancient and equally (if not more) valid Islamic tradition, recorded in the Koran and derived from Babylonian and Sumerian accounts, that the Ark came to rest on a smaller mountain, Judi Dag, in the 'far north ' of their world...despite all these and other considerations, implicit and dogmatic faith in Noah's Ark, the Tower of Babel and other such notions, continue to spring eternal in the hearts of fanatics. Cecil B DeMille has much to answer for.

Are they cranks? and who are we to be so superior? If they did come up with something it would create a most interesting situation - but all they have proved so far is that some of them have some pieces of old wood. And yet! - Navarra recovered some items in a 1955 trip - several worked planks of oak and an L-shaped beam, beneath a glacier where he claims the Ark rests. They were dated by UCLA as 1250 years old. Wood from his 1969 search was put at between 1500 and 1600 years - not old enough to tally with the Ark-myth, but old enough to be planted by some ancient jokers with a weird sense of humour and foresight. But there are doubts on these datings. Labs in Madrid, Paris and Bordeaux thought the samples had been contaminated with Carbon-14 in the analysis, and put them nearer "5000 years", certainly "of great antiquity".(5). If not bits of Ark - then what? But there, for the moment, the mystery resides - the Press having gone on to matters of immediate concern, and the Turks effectively dampening our Arkeologist's ardour.

We think Fort should have the last, and probably the most sensible, word: "I accept that anybody who is convinced that there are still relics upon Mt Ararat, has only to climb Mt Ararat, and he must find something that can be said to be part of Noah's Ark, petrified perhaps. The meaning that I read in the whole subject is that, in this Dark Age we are living in, not even such rudimentary matters as the shape of this earth have ever been investigated, except now and then to support somebody's theory." (6).

1) Daily Mail, 23 Feb 74. Credit: Steve Moore.
2) Daily Express, 23 Feb 74. Credit: S Moore.
3) St Louis (Missouri) Post-Dispatch, 31 March 74, 18A. Credit: Mark Hall.
4) San Francisco Chronicle, 23 April 74. Credit: Loren Coleman.
5) Atlanta Journal & Constitution, 9 June 74, 18B. Credit: Mark Hall.
6) New Lands - Charles Fort. Ch.VI. (1923).
7) San Francisco Examiner, 29 June 74. Credit: Loren Coleman.
8) Winnipeg (Man.) Free Press, 3 July 74. Credit: Mark Hall.
9) Atlanta Journal & Constitution, 18 July 74, 7B. Credit: Mark Hall.
10) Windsor (Ontario) Star, 6 July 74. Cr: M Hall.



falls

FALL OF BRICK-PIECES : MADRAS 1921.

We have some pleasure in bringing you the following item, which by most accounts of stones observed falling in restricted places (eg. from the ceiling of a room) or from undetected origins (see the cases which follow this one) is remarkable because unlike them it is highly suggestive of the mechanism of teleportation - that is, we learn a little bit more than is hidden and glossed over in the vague and dismissive term 'poltergeist'.

The main credit should go to Stefan Mucha who sent us this transcript of a question-and-answer session , the answers being given by a character called 'The Mother' who is a leading disciple of the late Sri Aurobindo. It concerns a well witnessed fall of pieces of brick in the buildings of the Ashram, in Pondicherry, Madras - an event which is said to have occurred "sometime in the middle of December, 1921." And the transcript is from the 'Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education' for February 1974.

Stefan pointed out that Fort mentions a similar case: "Madras Mail, March 5, 1888 - pieces of brick that, in the presence of many investigators were falling in a schoolroom, in Pondicherry." (LO! Ch IV.) Either Fort made an uncharacteristic error of some magnitude, or we have two quite seperate events which repeat their main details. We have no means of checking on this at the present and would be grateful if any of you could throw any light on this interesting case.

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YOU HAD SAID YOU WOULD TELL US THE STORY OF THE STONES.

That is quite another domain. That's not the domain of death; it is a domain of the material vital, that which controls the physical - the material vital. There was a time when we were living in the 'Guest House' (1). Sri Aurobindo lived on the first floor, in the room right at the end which is now the meditation-room of the 'Boarding'. I believe there are two rooms side by side, one used to be a bathroom but is now an ordinary room, and a room next to it which was mine - the bathroom and another room. Sri Aurobindo was on one side.

How many of us were there in that house?..Amrita was there ⟨turning to disciple⟩, weren't you, Amrita? Do you remember that day? ⟨Laughter⟩. We had a cook called Vatel. This cook was rather bad tempered and didn't like being reproved about his work. Moreover he was in contact with some Musulmans who had it seems, magical powers - they had a book of magic and the ability to practise magic. One day, this cook had done something very bad and had been scolded (I don't know if any of you knew Datta, it was Datta who had scolded him) and he was furious. He had threatened us, saying: "You will see, you will be compelled to leave this house." We had taken no notice of it.

Two or three days later, I think, someone came and told me that stones had fallen in the courtyard - a few stones, three or four: bits of brick. We wondered who was throwing stones from the next house. We did exactly what we forbid children to do: we went round on the walls and roofs to see if we could find someone or the stones or something, we found nothing.

That happened, I believe, between four and five in the afternoon. As the day declined, the number of stones increased. The next day, there were still more. They started striking the door of the kitchen specially and one of them struck Datta's arm as she was going into the courtyard. The number increased very much. The interest was growing. And as the interest grew, it produced a kind of effect of multiplication! And the stones began falling in several directions at the same time, in places where there were neither doors nor windows. There was a staircase, but it had no opening in those days: there was only a small bull's-eye. And the stones were falling in the staircase this way ⟨ vertical gesture⟩; if they had come through the bull's-eye, they would have come like this ⟨slantwise movement⟩, but they were falling straight down. So, I think, they all began to become truly interested.

I must tell you that this Vatel had informed us that he was ill and for the last two days (since the stones had started falling) he hadn't come. But he had left his under-cook, a young boy of about thirteen or fourteen, quite fat, somewhat lifeless, a little quiet, and perhaps a little stupid. And we noticed that when this boy moved around, wherever he went the stones increased. The young men who were there (Amrita was among them) shut the boy up in a room, with all the doors and windows closed. They started making experiments ⟨shouting⟩: "Close all the doors, close all the windows." And there was the boy sitting there inside and the stones began falling, with all the doors and windows closed! And more and more fell, and finally the boy was wounded in the leg. Then they started feeling the thing was going too far.

I was with Sri Aurobindo: quietly we were working , meditating together. The boys cast a furtive glance to see what was going on and began warning us, for it was perhaps time to tell us that the thing was taking pretty serious proportions. I understood immediately what the matter was.

I must tell you that we had made an attempt earlier to exhaust all possibilities of an ordinary, physical explanation. We had called in the police, informed them that there was somebody throwing stones at us, and they wanted very much to come and see what was happening. So a policeman - who was a fine good fellow - immediately told us: "Oh! You have Vatel as your cook! Yes, yes, we know what it is!" He had a loaded pistol and stood waiting in the courtyard - not a stone! I was on the terrace with Sri Aurobindo; I said to Sri Aurobindo: "That's a bit too bad. We call the police and just then the stones stop falling! But that is very annoying, in this way he will think we haven't told the truth, for no stones are falling." Instantaneously the stones began falling again ⟨ laughter⟩.

You should note that the stones were falling quite a way off from the terrace and not one of them came anywhere near us. So the policeman said: "It's not worthwhile my staying here. I know what it is. It is Vatel who has done this against you. I am going." It was after this that we made the experiment of shutting up the boy and the stones began to fall in the closed room, and I was informed the boy was wounded. Then I said: "All right, send the boy out of the house immediately. Send him to another house, anywhere, and let him be looked after, but don't keep him here, and then, that's all. Keep quiet and don't be afraid." I was in the room with Sri Aurobindo and I thought: "We'll see what it is." I went into meditation and gave a little call. I said: "Let us see who is throwing stones at us now? You must come and tell us who is throwing stones." I saw three little entities of the vital, those small entities which have no strength and just enough consciousness confined to one action - it is nothing at all; but these entities are at the service of people practising magic. When people practise magic they order them to come and they are compelled to obey.(2) There are signs, there are words. So they came. They were frightened, they were terribly frightened! I said: "But why do you fling stones like that? What does it mean, this bad joke?" They replied: "We are compelled, we are compelled...{laughter}It is not our fault. We have been ordered to do it; it is not our fault."

I really felt so much like laughing, but still I kept a serious face and told them: "Well, you must stop this, you understand!" Then they told me: "Don't you want to keep us? We shall do all that you ask." "Ah!" I thought. "Let us see. This is perhaps going to be interesting." I said to them: "But what can you do ?" "We know how to throw stones." {laughter}. "That doesn't interest me at all; I don't want to throw stones at anyone...But could you perchance bring me flowers? Can you bring me some roses?" Then they looked at each other in great dismay and answered: "No. We are not made for that. We don't know how to do it." I said: "I don't need you , go away, and take care specially never to come back for otherwise it will be disastrous!" They ran away and never came back.

There was one thing I had noticed: it was only at the level of the roof that the stones were seen, from the roof downwards we saw the stones just till the roof; above it there were no stones. That meant it was like an automatic formation. In the air nothing could be seen - they materialised in the atmosphere of the house and fell.

And to complete the movement, the next morning (all of that happened in the evening), the next morning I came down to pay a visit to the kitchen - there were pillars in the kitchen - and upon one of the pillars I found some signs with numbers as though made with a bit of charcoal, very roughly drawn, and also words in Tamil. Then I rubbed out everything carefully, and made an invocation, and so it was finished - the comedy came to an end.

However not quite. Vatel's daughter was 'ayah' in the house, the maid-servant. She came early in the afternoon in a state of intense fright saying "My father is in the hospital, he is dying. This morning something happened to him; suddenly he felt very ill and he is dying. He has been taken to the hospital, I am terribly frightened." I knew what it was. I went to Sri Aurobindo and said to him: "You know, Vatel is in the hospital, he is dying." He looked at me and smiled: "Oh! Just for a few stones!" {laughter} That very evening Vatel was cured. But he never started anything again.

HOW COULD THE STONES BE SEEN?

That's what is remarkable. There are beings that have the power of dematerialising and rematerialising objects (3). These were quite ordinary pieces of bricks, but these pieces materialised only in the field where the magic acted. The magic was practised for this house, specially for its courtyard, and the action of the vital forces worked only there. That was why when I sent the boy away and he went to another house, not a single stone hit him any more. The magical formation was made specially for this house, and the stones materialised in the courtyard. And as it was something specially directed against Datta, she was hit on her arm.

There was yet something else...Ah, yes! We came to know later which magician Vatel had gone to. He had gone to a magician who, it seems, is very well known here and had said he wanted definitely to make us leave that house - I don't know why. He was furious and so he asked the magician to make stones fall there. The magician told him: "But that's the house Sri Aurobindo lives in!" He said: "Yes." "Ah, no! I'm not going to meddle in this business; you manage it, I'm not going to be involved." Then Vatel insisted very much; he even promised him a greater reward, a little more money. The magician said: "Well, look here; we're going to make a rule: in a circle of twenty-five metres around Sri Aurobindo," (I think he said twenty or twenty-five metres) "the stones will not fall. Always there will have to be twenty-five metres between the stones and Sri Aurobindo." And he arranged his order of magic in this way. And that was why never did a single stone come anywhere near us, never. They fell at the other end of the courtyard.

They know how to do that, it is written in their books. These are words and ceremonies having a certain power. Naturally those who do that must have a vital force. A vital force is necessary - a little mental force also, not much, even very little - but quite a strong vital power and knowing how to control these little entities, govern them. And these people rule them just through fear, for they have the power to dissolve them, so these entities fear this very much. But upon all these formations, all these entities, it is enough to put simply one drop of the true pure light, the pure white light - the true pure light which is the supreme light of construction - you put one drop upon them; they dissolve as though there had been nothing at all there. And

yet this is not a force of destruction; it is a force of construction, but it is so alien to their nature that they disappear. It is this they feared, for I had called them by showing this white light, I had told them: "Look, there is this! Come!" But their offer was touching: "Oh! We shall do everything you want." "Good, what can you do?" - "Throw stones!" {laughter}

* * * * *

NOTES:

1) A note in the transcription indicated that Sri Aurobindo lived in the 'Guest House', 41 Rue Francois Martin (presumably in Pondicherry) between 1913 and Sept. 1922.

2) As the story and description of Vatel's psychic varmints unfolds, it struck us that there was a great degree of parity with the systems of magic used by the Polynesian Kahuna magicians, particularly from the neglected works of Max Freedom Long. Many Kahunas had (or inherited) "usually about three" spirit minions, which, being of a lower order of consciousness and particularly subject to strong hypnotic suggestion, could be 'charged up' with mana ("vital force") and sent to pester the chosen victims. Long records instances of such unihipili spirits manifesting as 'poltergeists' in each of his books, perhaps the most useful for general outline of the whole system of Kahuna magic being SECRET SCIENCE BEHIND MIRACLES published in 1948 originally by Long's 'Huna Research Association'. We in no way wish to come out 'for' or 'against' the existence of an occult technology - that is prejudging the issue to some extent, either way. We see our task as stimulating the questions, not as supplying any answers. We, for example, note the increase in activity around the boy-cook, but he did not seem essential. The motives were plainly there for the rogue, Vatel - but the boy was not implicated in his vendetta. If the boy was a catalyst for the action, would the 'magic' have worked if he were not there? Those 'spirits' bring a vast 'fall' of questions, too.

3) We hesitate to suggest that this parallel can be meaningfully prosecuted, but the Huna system of magic was in fact quite systematically codified and symbols enabled simplified formulae to be written down for 'transformations'. A wavy line was the symbol for the lowest form of 'vital force' or mana; a double wavy line was the energy of the 'middle self'; and a triple wavy line was the energy of the 'High self'. Long postulated a series of 'voltage transformations' in which the three forms could be raised or lowered into forms for a particular use. The 'High Self' was the part of a being credited with the power to do the actual transforming. In apporting an object or healing a broken bone, for example, the 'High Self' would amplify the low and middle 'voltages' using the power to dematerialise (increase its rate of 'vibration'?), transport, and then rematerialise the form using the coherent form of the 'shadowy body' as some kind of mould or pattern. Please see virtually the whole of Max Freedom Long's output for details and discussion of 'vital forces', apport mechanisms and psychic fauna.

In fact, if any publishers are listening: since we should be becoming more conscious of the need to re-cycle rubbish, a new edition of SECRET SCIENCE BEHIND MIRACLES or SECRET SCIENCE AT WORK would be a darn sight more nourishing than many other quite tasteless literary roughages.

* * *

'NIGHT PROWLER' STONES CITY FAMILY HOME.

Let's come a bit nearer to the present, where we have a few curious incidents. The Manchester Evening News for 6 May 69 carries a story that a 'mystery bombardier' has kept up a barrage of bricks, stones and milk bottles on the back of the Parr family's semi-detached council house. They had moved in just fourteen months previously to these hazardous hails, which start up at midnight. There is much 'angle' on the story about the family's shattered nerves and windows.

A few weeks later, the story hits the nationals: we take our notes from the Daily Mirror, 29 May. Ah! The police have moved into the drama {giggle}. Constant searches and stake-outs have revealed nothing - It, 'The Night Prowler' as they call it, just doesn't perform when the bobbies are about. The Parrs, of Blandford Drive, New Moston, Manchester, are even more tense, not having slept decently , often waiting up to 2 or 3 in the morning before daring to go to bed, since the rumpus began. Some nights, it is reported, the 'Prowler' struck as many as three times, and many windows have been broken during the period. The police state, rather blandly: "We have had reports of malicious damage at this address and we are looking into the matter." The last anyone heard was the sound of the police 'looking'. Yet we ask ourselves how, on a small housing estate where these events over a considerable period of time could hardly be kept quiet (in all senses), did no neighbours ever see anything, or anyone, acting suspiciously? Perhaps it's not an anyone or anything we ought to be looking for. It may have no connection at all, but we note that the Parrs have two sons aged 10 and 12, and recall the role of pubescence as a catalyst in poltergeist cases. (Credit for both clippings to Peter Rogerson.)

NIGHT RAIDER HITS HOME WITH STONES.

Much the same kind of mystery, but now we have the frightened family of Roger Ansell, of The Street, Swallowfield, Berkshire, whose life has been made a misery by the unknown 'Night Raider' for the previous nine weeks. Despite close watches over that period they still cannot understand it all. No one around them bears them any grudges; nobody has seen anything suspicious, even in the midst of the attacks. Three children again.

Its time to use our little device for constructive asides - A police officer is reported as saying: "We know the side from where the stones are being fired. Now its just a matter of catching the man." {chortle and choke} Well no prizes for guessing that even knowing 'the man's' hiding place hasn't

helped them catch anyone. And, what was that about 'fired'?? We have looked closely and have found no reports of a man, or something that may be masquerading as a man, lugging a giant catapult from Croyden to Swallowfield. Report from Sunday Express 28 April 74. Credit: RE Cotton and Steve Moore.

CATAPULT MAN' SCARES FAMILY.

This time its the Muir family of Allen Rd, Croyden: the date, from 23 Oct 73 for at least a week: the source, London Evening Standard 20 Oct 1973: the credit, John Brosnan.

I don't know if this picture will come out clearly but it shows James Muir looking through one of his smashed windows, holding one of the large stones, one of more than 150 that have broken 40 panes of glass over the period of activity. Again a family is described 'at wits end' with no idea why anybody should wage such a vendetta of vandalism against them. Muir has even given up his work driving lorries to comfort and somewhat ineffectively guard his family and home.

The police were called and despite an intensive hunt with tracker dogs, during which stones still shattered windows at the Muir home, they found nothing...not even a clue. The police theory was that there was a man hiding somewhere on the housing estate, lobbing these massive stones, probably with a "giant catapult" {guffaw}. If the agency was a man, they must have thought, he would have to be pretty near the house to hurl things of some weight - but he wasn't - thus by superlative police investigation and deduction they establish that there must be a man with a giant catapult somewhere on the estate. A spokesman said: "We have investigated this pretty thoroughly, and still have no clue. We have talked to residents in the area but they have seen nothing". See Fort's BOOK OF THE DAMNED Ch.13, and Ch.22 and elsewhere in WILD TALENTS for many cases of stones that have fallen or been thrown from undetectable sources.

Muir has three young children, but no information on their ages is given. We wrote to Muir but have not received a reply to date. We wrote to the local police to discover if they had 'aprehended' anyone yet - but received in return a terse mind-your-own-business note from Scotland Yard. We were pleased to have succeeded in getting some kind of reply at least.

* * *

IS SHOOTING FISH IN A BARREL, SPORT FOR GODS?

In the erratically chronicled history of objects falling (or being thrown?) from the sky, accounts of deaths from such causes are conspicuous by their absence. As William Porter commented in the last issue: "It is incredible to consider that over 20,000,000 meteors enter the atmosphere daily, at a speed of 45mpsecond. Despite this, no death has been recorded, attributable to a meteorite strike." (N5 p12.) That's twenty million daily; and all those people below. It might correspond in scale to the random movement of particles, where some thermodynamic processes like the transference or flow of heat 'depend ' on 'chance' collisions...and the action of chance throwing up a situation in which the number of collisions was near to zero. (No doubt I shall be hearing from some outraged physicists shortly).

But conversely, the number of reports which recount 'near-misses' by things falling from the sky are quite prominent. This is to be expected, but in turn underlines the fundamental question that, given situations with high proportions of 'near-misses', why are the number of 'hits' so startlingly low? Is an unknown factor operating on the random processes of chance to eliminate or prohibit certain configurations? We may never know the answer to this - and we certainly won't if we don't ask questions. But meanwhile we can continue to collect clues to the solution.

CAR ATTACKED BY SKY CULPRIT.

A story has come our way of a youth in Yorkton, Saskatchewan,who was driving, about a mile south of the town, when a molten substance fell out of the sky and onto his car, burning a hole through the the grill and melting into the windshield.The ground around the car was also struck, setting fire to the grass. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police confirmed the boy's story and identified the substance as 'meteorite'. Decatur (Illinois) Herald 9 June 74 - this incident happening on the friday 7th. Credit: Loren Coleman.

GIANT HAILSTONE INJURES GIRL.

Daily Mirror 20 Aug 71: that a hailstone as big as a grapefruit fell on the head of an 18-year-old girl, near Brive, France, seriously injuring her. Other hailstones, weighing up to 3lbs,crashed through the roofs of houses. A rare story.

Daily Mirror 24 Jan 72: that a 4ft-square block of ice crashed to the ground in Shirley, Surrey, on the 23rd, narrowly missing a house. It was believed to have 'fallen from an aircraft.' It is conceivable that ice falls from aircraft (see NEWS 3 p8 for a brief discussion) - but chunks of solid ice 4 foot square takes a lot of believing. Credit to Anthony Smith for both above.

Daily Express 10 Jan 73: a 10lb block of solid ice fell out of the sky and shattered Walter Bowden's front porch. Walter was at his home in West Wickham, Kent, with flu, when he heard an 'almighty crash'. "I rushed downstairs to find the place littered with broken ice and tiles. It's a miracle no one was hurt. If this block of ice had fallen on the house proper, it might have come right through." He collected some and preserved it in his fridge. Walter says he heard the sound of aircraft at the time, which is not surprising as his house is near where planes make

the final turn to come into London Airport; in fact about 700 of them a day, according to an official of the Airport Authority. Walter's plans to pin the legal blame on a aircraft was nipped in the bud, since it was impossible to prove which one was responsible, or indeed if it had fallen from a plane at all. Our thought is that if ice does fall from aircraft, and 700 a day fly over that area, then why hasn't it happened more frequently there?

Above: Mr. and Mrs. Wildsmith examine their newly acquired car damaged by the falling ice. Mrs. Wildsmith is standing where she was washing the car when the ice landed. Below: a fragment of the 18 inch cube of ice that hit the car.

MYSTERY ICE MISSES WOMAN BY INCHES. (Photo, left). Mrs N Wildsmith of 664 Rayners Lane, Pinner, Middlesex, was cleaning her car at 5.10pm, 25 March, when a 'cube' of ice, 18 inches square, crashed into it. At the same time roof tiles were smashed at 31 Marsh Rd, nearby. Eye-witness Mrs Doris Fox who lives next door to Mrs Wildsmith, said she was working in her garden when she saw "a huge white ball which looked as though it were making straight for me." She said she ducked as it went over, making a noise like a firework rocket - then heard the loud crash as it hit the car. "I thought it was a bomb, it was such a crack." Her husband, Albert, was also in the garden: "I thought their fridge had exploded through a window when I first looked up and saw all the ice over the car and path. Mrs Wildsmith was damn lucky - she was just a foot or two away from being killed." A bucketfull of shattered yellowy-brown ice was collected and stored in a deepfreeze to aid any future analysis. Over in Marsh Road, Miss Elsie Urquhart said she heard a loud bang and rushed out to find a neighbour looking at the ice, smashed tiles and plastic guttering. She too collected samples.

There is no record of any analysis being made, in fact the Civil Aviation Authority seemed to be aware of some futility, saying: "Analysis would not help trace where the ice came from, as most airlines now use the same liquids in sanitary and waste equipment." Normally its the wings icing up that gets blamed - this is the first suggestion we have come across, of aerial effluent. But the waste tanks are normally emptied on the ground - unless there was some seepage. If so, surely such a copious leak would render the offending craft readily identifiable? Again the CA Authority seemed reluctant to take things further, falling back on the same arguments as put to Walter Bowden (in the previous story), offering only a list of landing times, saying: "All the liability rests with the operator of the plane."

The spokesman added that only two cases had been recorded of ice falling from aircraft that winter - both near Gatwick Airport and without injury or damage. At a guess from a map of the northwest London area we would venture that the iceblock came down from the north-northwest. The nearest major airport is London-Heathrow, nearly south-southwest, so it is possible for something to have come off a plane on a turn to approach, and as it came into lower warmer air. But it does seem to us that this ice block had a peculiarly flat and low trajectory to come over quite a few rows of houses at rooftop level. And the extent of the damage to the car (see photo) suggests a pretty smallish impact from something falling from the sky, whatever the trajectory. There is enough fresh data here for any enterprising reader to do an analysis of the event. We'd like to see that , and will help in any way if anyone should take it on. The details are from the Harrow Observer for 29 March 74. Credit: Carl Grove.

Cont/ p14.

MARK HALL'S

FORTEANA USA

'ARLINGTON BEAST' TERRIFIES WASHINGTON SUBURB.

An unidentifiable animal was reportedly responsible for the deaths of many small domestic animals during June, in northern Virginia, just across the Potomac river from Washington DC. the depredations of the 'Arlington Beast' occurred in the vicinity of a wooded hollow along Four Mile Run, a tributary of the Potomac. Newspaper accounts reflect the uncertain descriptions given by observers - they said at various times that it was a large animal, about 3 feet long with a hairless tail 7 or 8 inches long; that it was as big as a dog, with a stubby hairy tail; and that it was thin, hairless, resembling a medium-sized dog with no tail, and big teeth. It was active only at night, but was readily recognizable, however, by its whining, screeching, and shrieking sounds. It was also reported to emit a high-pitched whine or cackle or a 'shrieking laugh' after doing in some small animal. The game warden for Arlington County reported that two dogs and five cats were attacked. Also, on 15 June the animal invaded a rabbit hutch and killed 16 rabbits. Another person reported three rabbits killed and the hide stripped from one. A peculiar feature of these attacks is that none of the animals were killed for food. One 151b tomcat was attacked and died 7 days later - an autopsy revealed the attacker was not rabid. At one point the 'Beast' was caught in a small cage-trap, but it broke loose. A second larger trap snared only a hungry German shepherd, not the 'Beast'. The animal's screeching was not heard during the third week in June, about the time it was actively hunted by local officials with guns and dogs. On June 28, two police detectives filed a report that said they were unable to find any cats or dogs that were attacked by any animal. (Perhaps they should have interviewed some humans!) The headlines of the Washington Post read, 'ARLINGTON MYSTERY CREATURE NEVER WAS ', and officialdom had dispatched another mystery. Identifications of the animal, meanwhile, continued, ranging from 'wolverine' to 'kangaroo' (!), with bob-cat being the most popular. But these activities are unusual for any known animal, and the identity of the 'Beast' remains a mystery (except, of course, to the Arlington police and the Washington Post. Sources Houston (Texas) Chronicle 21 June 74. Washington (DC) Star-News 21 & 22 June 74. Northern Virginia Sun (Arlington, Va.) 22 June 74. Washinton (DC) Post 22 June & 2 July 74.

The inevitable happened. Almost a month after the depredations of the 'Beast' ceased, an exotic animal was captured three miles from the site of the mystery. Arlington police, who had formerly denied the existence of any mystery beast, said: "We do not relate the animal to the unidentified animal reported several weeks ago in south Arlington." This time they were probably right. Civet cats do not scream - they growl and cluck under stress. And so this male civet, the mark of a collar indicating he had been somebody's pet, dozed peacefully in a cage at the National Zoo after being chased by policemen for one hour on 11 July. Once more the 'Beast' remains a mystery. Washington (DC) Star-News 12 July 74. Washington (DC) Post 12 July 74.

SWARMS.

An infestation of Norway rats was reported in Carpentersville, Illinois, in early April. Chicago Daily News 3 April 74, and Los Angeles Times 4 April 74. -- Locusts were reported swarming for two weeks near Old Fort, North Carolina. Houston (Texas) Chronicle 14 May 74. -- Fire ants reported on the march from eastern regions of Texas, toward the Rio Grande in June. Houston (Texas) Chronicle 14 June 74. -- Field mice (Microtus californicus) invaded San Jose, California, in June, the worst outbreak there in eight years. San Francisco Chronicle 21 June 74. -- Forest Tent caterpillars were five inches deep in one woman's yard, as they swarmed near Alonsa, Manitoba, in June, in massive conglomerations several miles across. Atlanta (Georgia) Constitution 21 June 74. Los Angeles Times 21 June 74. Winnepeg Free Press 26 June 74.

UFOs OVER :-

Griswold, Connecticut, for a period of six months Norwich (Ct) Bulletin 7 April 74. -- Fairmont, Minnesota, on 9 April. Sentinel (Fairmont, Mn) 10 April 74.

UFOs identified: Flashing lights from an aerial billboard caused UFO reports near St. Louis. St. Louis (Missouri) Post-Dispatch 26 April (p1C.) & 6 March (p1B). -- Sixty silver iodide flares dropped by professional rainmakers generated reports around Drumheller, Alberta. Winnepeg Free Press 24 May 74 (p15.)

UFOs hunted: Fifteen magnetometers intended as UFO detectors are said to be in the homes of scientists and engineers scattered around San Diego county, California. Research psychologist JF Herr, spokesman for a group of 35 people, also said other sensing devices will be used in their study. San Francisco Examiner 22 March 74 (p28.)

A DOG THAT WAITS.

By mid-April a shy dog, marked like a collie but smaller, had spent five weeks sitting daily by a busy intersection in Conyers, Georgia. A nearby service station owner fed the dog but could not make friends with the animal. The dog seemed to be waiting for the owner who had probably left it there. It chased tan-coloured automobiles for a

short distance and then returned to wait at the intersection. Atlanta (Georgia) Constitution 4 April (8A) & 18 April (25A).

OVERHEADS.

Shortly after 9.00pm on 14 June, a Washington newspaperman watched a ball of fire move slowly and silently overhead,from his Kensington, Maryland, home. Later he heard a meteor had passed by but a spokesman for NICAP did not think it was a meteor. For them the matter was still 'under investigation." Washington (DC) Star-News 17 June (pB1) & 19 June 74 (pB1). -- Explosions and a spectacular flash of light were reported seen and heard on 1 July from parts of Utah, Arizona, Nevada, and California. The airport tower at Santa Barbara, Calif., placed the light south and east of that city. Houston (Texas) Chronicle 2 July 74 (1-14). -- Something meteor-like passed over Florida the night of 8 July, and may have landed (watered?) in Lake Okeechobee. Paul Harvey News 9 July 74.

'MASS HYSTERIA'.

If you believe in 'mass hysteria' you can dismiss the plight of the tykes at the Bay Harbor Elementary School in Florida. On 13 May, 39 of them suffered nausea, vomiting and fainting. Eight of those went into hospital and the rest went home. One doctor called this a case of 'mass hyperventilation', while another said the children's symptoms indicated exposure to a toxic gas. Repeated checks of water, air and air-conditioning ducts revealed nothing.

The trouble began when one girl in the cafeteria became ill. She went to the school clinic. Another class then entered the cafeteria and the problem began en-masse when several of them became sick. One eleven-year-old boy felt fine until, as he helped other students into cars on their way home, he felt stomach pains and immediately fainted. His mother took him home where he passed out again and then went to hospital. He had trouble sleeping that night, and the next day he still had the pains in his stomach. The classes were not in the cafeteria to eat, but only for a music lesson. Their teacher said that two weeks earlier she had felt faint there herself. Miami (Florida) Herald 14 & 15 May 74.

Previously on 27 April, a similar incident occurred in Thornhill, Ontario. 28 girl hockey-players aged 13 to 14 were taken to hospitals suffering from dizziness and nausea. Police and fire officials professed to be baffled. Gas checks were again negative, but the dressing-room was found to be stuffy. "It could have been a lack of oxygen," said a police sergeant. Toronto (Ontario) Star 29 April 74. -- This must be the season for these problems, because on 28 June, a secondary school in Tabora, Tanzania, was closed due to an outbreak of 'laughing disease'. 47 girls, crying and laughing were all hospitalised. Minneapolis (Minn.) Star 29 June 74. -- When 9 women in Concepcion, Argentina, showed symptoms of 'mass hysteria', their neighbours thought they knew why, according to the Buenos Aires newspaper La Razon. They tried to lynch a local mystic, Fu Man Chu, but he was given police protection. Atlanta (Georgia) Journal & Constitution 30 June 74.

GATCH, THE BALLOONIST.

The last accepted sighting of the gondola and balloons of the missing Tom Gatch is the report of the freighter 'Ore Meridian', made on 21 Feb 74. (see NEWS 4, p7. and NEWS 5, p9.) On 27 Feb Spanish news agencies Cifra and Europa Press, reported that thousands of people saw Gatch's balloon about 8am. over the Oratava Valley on the island of Tenerife. Only one balloon was seen, (not the cluster of eight reported on the 21st.) and was described as both blue, and rose-coloured, heading south-southwest at 3000 to 9000 feet.

Colonel Gatch climbs into the gondola of his balloon

These reports could not be supported, and later explanations included 'weather balloon', 'optical illusion', and 'a freak dust storm'. (1,2.) Nothing more has been printed about the air search made on 30 March in the vicinity of Guadeloupe island, but friends of the Gatch family searched for two days in that same area as advised by a Virginia psychic and found nothing. (3) The reward offered by the family has brought no results, but the family still hope Gatch may be found. And American ships participating in a weather study have been asked to watch for the floating gondola or balloons in the south Atlantic. (4). One coast-guard veteran sees the path and landfall of the floating balloon system this way. The balloon cluster would be off Puerto Rico during July; off Florida late in the summer; then travelling northward, crossing the north Atlantic, finally bearing down on the British Isles and possibly an Irish beach. (5). Sources: 1) Denver

(Colorado) Post 28 Feb 74. 2) Los Angeles Times 28 Feb 74. 3) Washington (DC) Star-News 1 July 74. 4) Rochester (Minn.) Post-Bulletin 15 July 74. 5) Washington (DC) Star-News 2 July 74.

GREAT 'INDIAN BATHTUB' MYSTERY.

Forest rangers and archaeologists have puzzled for years over the origin and meaning of depressions in rock, found in remote areas of Tulare County, California. The rock depressions, usually three feet across and 3½ to 4 feet deep, are situated in small groups at thirty different places near mountain peaks. All sites show signs of past Amerindian habitation, but present-day Amerinds can't give a clue as to how the holes were used. Speculation has included the idea that they were tubs for fermenting some unidentified plant, and the possibility of communal baths. Hence the rangers call this the 'Great Indian Bathtub Mystery'. Los Angeles Times 20 June 74.

HARD STUFF.

The UFO panel of the National Enquirer is puzzled by a piece of metal with a specific gravity of 14.9, denser than carbide and second only to diamond in hardness. The dense metal came from two Sewdish carpenters who say they found it after a UFO encounter near Stockholm in 1958. The National Enquirer 9 June 74 (p4.). Curiously enough, an engineering researcher at UCLA, Prof. Rointan F Bunshah, has just announced the development of "the second hardest material in the world, after diamonds." He calls it titanium carbide. Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Journal 19 April 74

COYOTE ATTACKS WORRY TOWN.

On the outskirts of Los Alamos (New Mexico) two girls were attacked by a coyote as they slept in sleeping-bags in their front yard. The father of one of the girls, James R Conn, said: "I can name incident after incident of people and animals attacked by coyotes here lately. People are run into their houses." Conn said the attack on the girls ceased when a neighbor heard their screams and came to investigate. "The neighbor said the coyote backed off when it saw him. But it just walked out into the middle of the street and calmly stood there, just watching to see what would happen."

Police say they see coyotes on city streets in early morning hours. "They'll come right up to the car, just like a pet dog. They aren't afraid of people at all, " said police Sgt. JR Keane. George Adamson of the State Fish & Game Department said that in 34 years with the agency he had never heard of a coyote attacking a human before. He theorized the behavior might be attributed to lack of food, the encroachment of humans into their former habitation, and predator control laws that restrict methods of killing coyotes "I can't figure out what's happening, " he says. Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Journal 4/9, 14 April 74.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR SUB SOON

See notes on page 2, for the new rates...Thanks.

ICE SMASHES HOUSE ROOF.

A piece of ice the size of a rugby ball burst through the roof of 77 Buckingham St, Scunthorpe, Lincs, while the occupants were downstrairs watching TV. Miss Doris Coult said they heard "two big bangs - and I thought it was a thunderbolt." Clarence Coult and his friend Frank Walker rushed upstairs and found a lump of ice, over a foot long, on the floor of Mr Walker's bedroom. It had broken through the roof and the ceiling. "We wondered if it came from an aeroplane - it was just ice. There was no metal or stone in it. We put it in the bath and it all melted away. It might seem funny now, but at the time it was quite frightening." The police were called, and though it's plain there is little they can do in such cases, this lot didn't help matter by pointing out that all the evidence had gone down the plug-hole.

Mr. Frank Walker inspects the damage to his ceiling.

Nigel Watson, who sent us this story, points out that the address in virtually in the town centre, and if any planes had thus strayed from accepted flightpaths then somebody ought to be responsible. But again, no clear evidence to like the matter to aircraft once and for all - except of course that it came down from up there. As Fort wrote in BOOK OF THE DAMNED : " Of all the meteorites in museums, very few were seen to fall. It is considered sufficient ground for admission if specimens can't be accounted for in any other way than that they fell from the sky - as if in the haze of uncertainty that surrounds all things, or that is the essence of everything, or in the merging away of everything into everything else, there could be anything that could be accounted for in only one way." The story is from the Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph 12 Aug 74; and the incident was on 10 Aug. (Please see NEWS 3 for further accounts of ice-falls.)

* * *

FALL OF MYSTERY ANIMAL.

We have accumulated a few notes on animals of various sorts falling out of the sky, and we'll include them here and make a bumper 'fall' issue. Anders Liljegren, an active UFO researcher in Sweden, sent us the following translation of a record of a very curious event. "Bishop Rhyzelius of Linköping, Sweden, wrote in 'Brontologia Theoligico-historica', 1721, about a thunderstorm in August 1708, when a strange animal fell from the sky into a street of Norrköping. A number of eye-witnesses described the animal as "like a beaver" with a "big lower jaw", "small eye", a "short backbone" and "brownish in colour". Everyone thought it was a troll (old Scandinavian mythic(?) creature) coming down from the sky." Source: Norrköpings Tidningar 4 Aug 69. A certain ambig- in the letter leads us to think that is 1869 and not 1969; but we'll check on this.

FLYING FISHES.

River bailiffs have been told a fishy tale about a mystery angler who made off with a 10lb salmon. He was seen by late-night fishermen Bill Treen & Bernard Bodmin, by the harbour at Poole, Dorset, when a fish hit the man's head and fell into his lap. They suppose the fish leapt from the harbour - but it is questionable how they could determine that, let alone its species in the darkness. Not that we could tell any more than that. We only consider it in the light of the many stories we have (see Fort and previous issues) on fishes that fall from the skies singly or in vast quantity, or they simply 'appear' where they were not before. Above story from Sun 18 July 73. Credit: Anthony Smith.

A TURNIP FOR THE BOOKS.

Recently we received the following letter from Peter Roberts, a friend and Fortean: "I thought of something Fortean the other day. My life has been, so I always thought, singularly uneventful- no midnight mutilations or manifestations of horses, nor even a spot of black rain. However, I suddenly remembered the Falling Fish Incident which may be quasi-Fortean in nature. One morning in the summer of 1961 or 62 I noticed an object lying in the garden. It looked like a turnip and I didn't bother to investigate (though a fallen turnip should have aroused curiosity). About two hours later, my aunt went out with some washing, came back, and said would I throw the dead fish on the lawn in the dustbin. Still no activity on my part. An hour later, about noon, I was reminded of the job with menaces, so I went out with a shovel, prodded the fish, stirring it into unexpected life. A two gallon bucket was filled with water and I stuck the fish in it, where it promptly started to splash around actively. Since it was too big for the bucket I transferred it to an old washing tub. One fin was off, otherwise it was intact and unscarred.

"Now we do have a small ornamental fishpond and the logical explanation offered by my grandmother was that it had jumped out. Since the pond contained only small goldfish and the occasional newt this was unlikely. (It wasn't deep and we did stocktaking when we cleaned it out every few years or so.) Not being an expert on fish, I couldn't identify it, though it looked like a straightforward freshwater kind. The nearest river must be the Avon, about two miles away. Explanation? Umm...seagull? I didn't know fish could survive that long - especially in sunlight on a mown lawn. We kept it till evening when we took it to a nearby brook (about 200 yards) and chucked it in. The brook is shallow and pretty polluted, though it did harbour sticklebacks. It certainly couldn't have produced a fish that size (and it wasn't in flood or anything). A fish that jumped over eight houses and a main road would be a marvel in its own right, anyway. So it goes!"

The loss of the fin puts us in mind of the 'wounded' salmon that was discovered where no salmon was the night before, (see NEWS 3 p5) where the 'dropped by a bird' theory is also ventured (and it seems half-heartedly). Did it come from the sky in the first place? Does anyone know of an authoritative observation of a bird carrying a fish far inland and then dropping it? Since this theory, like the aeroplanes for falling ice, and the whirlwinds for falls of frogs and periwinkles, is trotted out every time we discover a fish in an unlikely place, we would like to know its orthodox pedigree.

THE DAY IT RAINED PELICANS.

This time we have witnesses who saw the doomed creatures plunge out of the sky. The giant white pelicans were migrating inland from their winter on the Gulf Coast, and flying over Texas at the time, on 13 April. "They looked like whitecaps falling from the sky," said Leo Lyons, who saw 90 of the majestic birds dashed onto the waters of Lake Waco. 33 other pelicans fell at Cranfills Gap that same day. Those that fell at Lake Waco could not be retrieved until the next day because of storms there. Boaters on the lake found some of them swimming around aimlessly, and 12 of them had broken wings. The birds that fell at Cranfills Gap showed no sign of being battered, though Waco Game Warden Butch Young said: "They were apparently soaring at great heights, and of course, when they hit the ground it was instantaneous death."

Scientists theorised that the birds may have been caught in a tornado (a twister had been in the Lake area that day, though there is no information about their respective times), or that a loud noise, like a roll of thunder, had upset their equilibrium (again, the report adds that thunderstorms 'roamed' the area). The question we would like to ask is that if this was the case, why is there no mention of any other birds falling in the same areas? Is this the same selective force that seems to operate on the frogs and fishes, precipitating showers of things of the same species or size or age ; that keeps seperate ponds in the Super Sargosso sea floating above us? And again,if those theories were so,why does it not happen more often wherever there are birds and thunderstorms? (See Fort's various books for accounts of birds dropping out of clear skies,

sometimes dazed, sometimes dead to a man bird(?). The above story was from the Detroit (Michigan) News 26 April 74. Credit: Mark Hall.

Mind your heads - and windows - that's all we can say, while we wait for a corelating genius to come along . There is no guarantee that these things - the falls and flows and apporting of things - will make any sense, no matter how many cases we collect. We feel that all we can see are trees - we need to step back to see the wood - only which direction is back? Where can we find a more complete way of looking - one that is not subjected to the fragmentation caused by our perceptual chauvinism rooted in linear 'time'. Answers on a postcard, please, to the Editor.....

fires

SMOKING CHAIRS CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH.

It seems that the only method those impious 'library angels' are aquainted with is an erratic one: nothing for long stretches of time, then several items bunched together. In the past couple of months we have been sent four notes on combustions in, by or on armchairs - three of them involve deaths.

The first is from the Daily Mirror, 14 June 71, which describes the fate of a pair of £80 armchairs, bought by Maureen McGlynn of Botley Road, Oxford. One started to split slowly and noticeably though no one was sitting in it. Days later, smoke began to pour out of it and the green vinyl began to melt - and the other one was beginning to show signs of damage. The more obvious ideas of the foam-padding combusting, or some odd focussing effect of sunlight through a window, do not appear to be the actual causes - and the scientists to whom such obviousness would occur confessed to remaining baffled - or rather, more baffled than when they set out -after four months of tests. A Consumer Group in Oxford took on the case, and they too could discover no faulty materials or workmanship - even experiments focussing sunlight failed to ignite the chair. Mrs McGlynn now keeps them well out of sunlight and away from her living room , just in case. Credit: A Smith. Also in Daily Mail of same date, Credit: Steve Moore.

San Francisco Examiner, 7 Feb 74 - that 'elderly' Purvis Mayweather, was found dead in his chair in front of a stove at 814 Henry St, Oakland, California; the upper half of his body was severely burned. Police assume that the stove flared up igniting his clothing. Credit: Loren Coleman. We are prompted to comment on the freakiness of such a supposed flare, to shoot out to the furthest part of the body away, and to remain there long enough to light his clothes. And why was the fire contained on his upper half? And why did he make no apparent move to escape or put it out? Its as though he were hypnotised into paralysis or otherwise oblivious to the pain and the flames, as we have observed before in similar cases.

Daily Mirror, 28 March 74 - that Mrs Elizabeth McPherson, 35, was found dead in a blazing armchair in her council flat at Nant Peris, Blacon, Cheshire. Police were unable to discover any cause for the fire. Credit: DJ McAllister. We wrote to the Chester Coroner's office but have so far failed to receive any reply.

San Francisco Chronicle, 26 April 74 - that Eldon R Fronk (a name to conjure with), 80, was found dead on his blazing living room sofa, by his wife Elsie, in their home on 1807 33rd St, San Francisco. Elsie said he had been smoking just before she left him to go to the basement garage, where she was when she smelt something burning, and returned to find him engulfed in flames. Credit: Loren Coleman. In the presence of mystery, a commonplace is grasped upon. It is conceivable that there have been cases where careless smokers have set themselves alight - but usually some evidence can be found. In nearly all our cases the various experts including the verdicts of Coroners and Inquests there are assumptions where there is a lack of evidence - and where our victims were non-smokers, parafin stoves, or candles or matches are rather dubiously supposed and duly blamed. Our only interest is in possibilities: that there is reason to believe that there are cases where people have spontaneously combusted and that these cases go largely unrecognised because of conventional suppositions. But whether the data, or alleged data, presented here are in fact such cases must depend on further research and your own inclinations.

* * *

HOT'N'TOTS.

Daily Express, 21 Sept 70 - that baby Simon Simeon, 6 weeks, was said to be comfortable after being burned in his blazing pram at the Simeon home in Arme Avenue, Poole, the previous night. Police are claiming that, in the absence of any clue to the cause of the fire whatever, that this must have been a deliberate act. They don't say by who or even how. The kid's mother Brenda, 24, indicated that the baby was "in the room" (no statement about which one), and so, if they don't suspect the mother, they feel that someone entered the house. But again, there appears to be no evidence, not to mention a motive, for any breaking-in.

London Evening News, 9 March 74 - three young children (Cosmo, 4yrs; Deborah, 2 yrs; Nicole, 11 mths.) died in a mysterious fire in their home in Savage Gardens, East Ham, London; the baby in her cot, one kid half under the bed and the other near a window. It is believed they suffocated, but the cause of the fire, which was confined to the bed and was out by the time police arrived, eluded a thorough investigation by both Fire Prevention officers and Forensic experts. Credit: Nigel Watson.

Birmingham Evening Mail, 16 April 74 - Mr Tarsen Kainth saw smoke and heard screams from nextdoor in Unett Street, Smethwick, Staffs, and he dashed in to find a blazing pram in a corner of the livingroom, and in it was 7-month-old Parvinder Kaur. "The room was filled with smoke. I covered my face and threw a bucket of water into the pram to put out the burning," he said. The baby's sisters,

aged 2 and 3 years, were in the room and carried to safety. Their father was at a Sikh temple at the time, and the mother had only just left the house to see a neighbour, leaving the kids alone for a few minutes. Fire experts could come up with nothing, and could only suggest that the kids could have been playing with matches. Doctors were still fighting to save the life of the baby girl at the Burns Unit of the Birmingham Accident Hospital, two days after the 'accident', which happened on the 14th April.

Birmingham Evening Mail, 22 April 74 - a week after the previous story, the same Burns Unit is tending to Mark Bradbury, aged 7, who was seriously ill after sleeping through a fire, which was confined to his bed, burning through two mattresses and severely damaging his legs and feet. When he eventually woke, his screams attracted neighbours, in Grimley Terrace, Selly Oak, Birmingham, and his parents, who were sleeping downstairs, and four other children, were taken to safety. No specific cause was found and identified, but there is some supposition about a lighted candle toppling over.

Even as I finished typing the above, another story appears in the Birmingham Evening Mail, for 26 Aug 74. A six-month-old girl, Lisa Tipton, one of five children of the Tiptons, died in a fire in a downstairs living-room at their home in Tennyson Road, Highfields, Stafford. Firemen were called by neighbours who saw smoke coming from the house - the fire being confined to that one room was brought under control in 10 minutes. Mrs Tipton, who was in the house at the time, and apparantly noticed nothing, was taken to hospital and treated for shock. Gas and electricity engineers checked appliances, and a police official said there were no suspicious circumstances indicated. No cause was identified for the fire, but a theory is forwarded: "A cushion is thought to have fallen onto an electric fire, caught fire and, in turn, set fire to the settee, on which the child was sleeping."

marine mysteries

WATERSPOUTS ON THE SOUTH COAST.

Waterspouts are pretty rare phenomena around the coast of the British Isles, and yet several popped up near the Isle of Wight (IoW) on the 18th August this year. The Master of the Hull-registered ship 'City of Athens', Mr Charles Hanson, radioed to coastguards in the Isle of Wight that he had just spotted a spout that could endanger small craft. It was heading towards land about 6 miles off St Catherine's Point, IoW. "It was about a hundred yards from us and looked like a solid column of water about 20 ft high; and there was a disturbance in the water around it like a hovercraft would make". The coastguard at Bembridge, IoW, said: "I've seen only one before. We put out a warning because they can be very dangerous. They're like a smaller version of a tornado - once they form they move very quickly."

Later that day the Meteorological Office confirmed that several had been sighted along the coast from IoW to Peacehaven, Sussex. They added: "They are formed when there is a very low level cumulonimbus - the black stormcloud. They are started off by a column of cloud reaching down to the level of the sea - but they are comparitively rare outside the tropics." (1). Another report numbered four spouts - and indeed, there had been thundery rain lashing the south of England for most of that day (2). Cryptic notes in both reports commented on the highest tides for 100 years on the coast.

A UFO SPECTACULAR, INCLUDING A WATERSPOUT.

The only other spout-note we have (and our records are far from complete in this) was about a very dramatic affair in 1967. Lobster fisherman Bertram Stride was suddenly confronted by a 400ft giant as he checked his pots, two miles off Highcliffe, Hants, early on the morning of 18 July. It was travelling at about 10mph and heading for the Isle of Wight. "I looked up, and there it was - a vast curtain of water about half a mile away, as high as Salisbury Cathedral."

As in the recent case of the Llandrillo pseudo-meteorite, this curious event seemed to coincide with a breathtaking display of aerial lights, so much so that again, as in the Llandrillo affair, the two events were treated together in the press. At about the same period as Mr Stride confronted his spout (which must have sprung up quite fast if he hadn't noticed it before) almost overhead, airline pilots said, they saw "clusters of objects streaming trails of lights", and observers in Kent saw a "bright ball of fire" heading toward France.

Brussels radio reported that UFOs with green lights in front and trailing bright sparks were seen over Charleroi. The US Airforce admitted that brilliantly lit objects were seen at 3 bases in West Germany; Ramstein, Spangdahlem and Sembach; and that they looked like they had flames coming out of them. Hundreds of eye-witnesses all over Switzerland described the objects variously as round, cylindrical and cigar-shaped, and "apparitions of light", crossing over the country at high speed leaving a red luminous trail several miles long; the entire circus lasting a mere 50 seconds.(3).

The observatories were goaded into trotting out the same old explanation - except Geneva, who had a new one on us - that the last rays of the descending moon crossed electrically charged clouds. And the waterspout by implication, is nothing but an overworked coincidence. We, at least would

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THE INTERNATIONAL FORTEAN ORGANIZATION

INFO

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Nigel Watson begins a series of three articles on his researches among the ghosts of his home county. Besides being Chairman of the Scunthorpe UFO Research Society (SUFORS) Nigel maintains an active interest in all aspects of Fortean phenomena and has put in much time 'on location'.

NOTES ON LINCOLNSHIRE GHOST PHENOMENA -- --1

by NIGEL WATSON.

In the October of 1972, myself and three other members of SUFORS were able to arrange to visit Mrs Ethel Rudkin at her home in Toynton All Saints near Spilsby. We spent a very interesting evening as she related to us several interesting tales and stories (and even revealed to us that there had been a plan afoot to launch a UFO in our midst).

Her 'Lincolnshire Folklore', although first published in 1936 in a limited edition of 400 copies, still shows its worth by its re-publication in 1973 (1). It followed in the wake of Gutch and Peacock's 'County Folklore, Vol.V.', 1908, on Lincolnshire folklore. However instead of taking her sources of information from already published works, as did the previous authors, Mrs Rudkin talked to and interviewed the people themselves, obtaining their stories and beliefs first hand.

Unfortunately, most of the old beliefs and practices are now almost dead. They began steadily to die out at the turn of the century, with villages turning into industrial towns, better communications, and people having a whole new outlook on life. The new folklore is now the world-wide one of flying saucers replacing the Black Dogs (2).

In a county like Lincolnshire, many apparitions and ghosts have been reported. The place is littered with them. Can so many reports be subjective? During my inquiries I received two interesting letters from Mr Sidney Benton of Horncastle, both of which are reproduced in full below.

GREAT, SHINING EYES.

"It was during the winter months of 1922 or 1923, when I was employed at a small local dairy. My job was to fetch up the cows from the fields, help to milk them and then deliver it to local people.

Part of my deliveries took me to one of the oldest parts of town. I usually took a short cut by going past an old Iron Foundry, over a small bridge with a water-wheel near it, then by the back of the Vicarage and past the old churchyard. On this particular evening I had made my deliveries and had just climbed over the small wooden palings on my way back to the dairy, when all at once, right in the centre of the path, appeared two great bright shining eyes.

I called out thinking the dog from the dairy had followed me, but got no answer. I climbed back over the fence and stood there almost petrified with fear. I don't know how long I stood there but suddenly the eyes were just blotted out. I must have been braver then than I am now, for I took my courage in both hands and got back over the fence and walked back over the spot where the eyes had been.

My employer and his wife and niece, noting that I looked white and frightened, asked the reason. They informed me that the dog had not left the dairy. After this experience, I was always sent on this particular part of my deliveries in daylight. On mentioning my experience to an old lady neighbour, she said that the spot was reputed to be haunted, as some people had been drowned when the ice gave way on the moat of what used to be an old castle there. A workmate friend tells me that he had seen the same thing some years earlier." I asked him for further information on these eyes, and his second letter was as follows:

"It was such a long time ago, but all I can remember of that night are the eyes appearing quite suddenly, only a few yards in front of me, at about two or three feet from the ground. I do remember that everything was still and quiet and that after what seemed quite a few minutes the eyes were just blotted out. I have always been convinced that this was something very strange and the attitude of my employers at the time strengthened my belief. They did not wish to talk about it, and would never let me go that way at night afterwards; and also someone would accompany me when I had to take the pony to the field at nights."

PHANTOM CYCLIST.

"Some five or six years later, I had another strange experience. I was then employed as a baker's roundsman and made deliveries with a horse and tilted cart. On this particular occasion I had finished my deliveries at West Ashby - Far Thorpe and was on my way home. As usual, both the horse and I were pretty tired out after a long day, and I just let the horse jog along at its own steady pace.

It would be about 7.30pm to 8pm when we were approaching West Ashby village and near the old park gates. Suddenly something startled my horse which reared up and set off at a gallop, nearly pulling me out of the cart as I hung on to the reins.

I glanced to the left and saw a man on a cycle, who had an old dinner-bag over his shoulder, and he seemed to be trying to pass on the wrong side of the road. After getting my horse under control again, I looked back to see if the man was alright, but to my great surprise there was no one there. I mentioned this to several people at the time, but no one could offer any explanation, nor could think of any worker who might be cycling along there at that time. I do remember that it was a rather hazy moon-lit night."

FAMILY HAPPENINGS.

"My grandfather (that is, my mother's father) who was a postman in the Spilsby area, was a great believer in telepathy. My mother used to tell my brother and sisters and I some very strange things

that happened to her when she was about fifteen years of age. Her mother was very ill and in bed for two years before she died - and every night would have a small kelly lamp by her bedside. Sometime after her death, when my mother was only fifteen, she was taking her five-year-old sister and her brother up to bed. On reaching the top of the staircase, the kelly lamp suddenly came alight. The next day she had a message from the Lake district to say that her father who was holidaying there, had been taken seriously ill.

On several occasions on going up to bed, my mother has found ornaments taken off the dressing-table and put on the bed, just like her mother used to do when dusting the bedrooms. At this time they were living at Spilsby, and my mother said she got so frightened that her father finally had to move house. All these people concerned have now passed on, but I can assure you that my mother was a very truthful and straightforward person and not the least likely to give way to idle fancies."

Well, I'd like to thank Mr Benton for letting me use the information he supplied me. Certainly, these instances seem most puzzling to us of the 20th century. Obviously, the incidents which Mr Benton related occured almost half a century ago, nonetheless I regard them as interesting and worthy of inclusion in this present work.

1) 'Lincolnshire Folklore' by Ethel Rudkin. Reprinted by EP Publishing Ltd. (1973). £2.50. 112pp 7 illos. ISBN: 0.85409.992.1.

2) Accounts of Black Dogs are not, unfortunately, included in her 'Lincolnshire Folklore', but later covered in her article 'The Black Dog' Folklore Vol.49, 1938.

MARINE MYSTERIES/ Cont.

like to know why so many coincidences happen - in this case, what relationship is there between aerial lights and quakes or spouts? We have, alas, not had time to investigate whether our little spouts of the 18th August were in synchronisation with anything else; but no real hurry there; if there is, it'll come out in time as our data builds up. Meanwhile perhaps someone could track down the national and saucer-mag coverage of that 1967 circus, since we have only a London evening paper source.

1) Daily Mail, 19 Aug 74. 2) Daily Mirror, 19 Aug 74. 3) London Evening News, 18 July 67. The credit for all items to Steve Moore.

scientific curiosities

THE SLEEPERS AWAKE!

Again, a ripple or movement in a dream-state of orderliness-disorderliness, throwing up a pattern , and then it is gone. The ripple of things coming together - the pattern of repeated discovery. When it's time for bacteriologists to find things , they do. In March this year, Dr Toshio Miwa, of Gifu University, announced to the Japan Bacteriological Society that scientists at Japan's Showa Base on Antarctica had discovered, in earth samples, bacteria believed to have continued living for "tens of thousands" of years. These microbes, which have survived as viable spores, are of the 10- to 15-type anaerobes capable of causing gas gangrene in humans, and were originally cultured, Dr Miwa believes, in the intestines of whatever animals at that time. Denver (Colorado) Post, 10 March 74.

Hot foot, as it were, on this news, we learn of an announcement by Dr Roy E Cameron of the Darwin Research Institute, California, via the National Science Foundation, who, with NASA, were sponsoring methods of detecting micro-organisms for the Viking Mars-landing mission in 1976. He talked of two discoveries of deep-frozen live bacteria, unlike anything previously discovered, in drilling samples from strata 10,000 to one million years old, again in the Antarctica Cameron and a team of scientists on the international 'Dry Valley' drilling project at Ross Island, McMurdo, found the bacteria in core-samples of volcanic rock containing pockets of ice, at 420, 750, 1070 and 1400 feet, and each find was different, both from the bugs at the other levels and those at the surface. The scientists were startled to discover them moving as soon as they were put under a microscope, and Cameron reckons that the heat from the drilling could have jolted them into life. But there their exhibitionism ended apparently because they refused to reproduce - as indeed any self-respecting thing would when there were voyeurs about.

Not so reserved, however, were the lusty little fellers found in marine sedimentary rock at Taylor Valley, about 60 miles away, who couldn't wait to get down to starting all over agin. "They formed unusual doughnut-shaped colonies that grew, or flowed in toward the centre as the colony expanded. After a while the colony had the shape of an inactive volcano," said Cameron. The reaction of some bacteriologists was reported as 'sceptical', as they recalled how they had been stung once before, over reports, 10 years ago, of a critter that hibernated for 180 million to 230 million years in some ancient salt crystals...reports that were later discredited. Scources: Rochester (Minn.) Post-Bulletin 30 April 74. Winnipeg (Manitoba) Free-Press 3 May 74. Credit: Mark Hall.

RIGHT-ON TRITON.

In mid-73, the Novosti Agency released news of a male Triton (Hynobius Keyserling) that was thawed back to life from a 90-year stretch in a block of ice recovered from 11 meters down in permafrost in North Yakutia. A follow-up report from the Ukranian Institute of Geochemistry & Mineral Physics to a Leningrad conference said that the triton, whose age was determined by radio-carbon analysis, lived for a further 6 months, and even produced healthy offspring. It was previously believed, the report said, that amphibia such as frogs, tritons and tadpoles, could not remain viable after being frozen in a state of anabiosis for more than 20 years. Sources: Des Moines (Iowa) Register 5 June 74. Credit: Mark Hall. And the Novosti Bulletin No.15103,5 June 74.

ON VARIOUS UNORTHODOX PROPERTIES OF WATER.

One can hardly think of a challenge to Science emerging from the everyday use of a substance we all take for granted and think ourselves quite familiar with. The substance presenting some scientists with a problem that goes beyond their cozy cubbyholed approach, is that of our common or garden water - and we are turning out to know less about it than we originally thought. Our correspondent, Phil Ledger, kicked off our train of thought with the following note:

"Fringe scientific and folk literature has records of water with 'special properties', attributable to no gross chemical differences from normal water. (1). If any properties of the water are 'real' in the sense of being detectable by currently accepted scientific means, then they are very subtle and/or basic, and hence by implication, it is difficult from a traditional viewpoint to see how they could act directly upon a complex living organism. A possible clue to the nature of such differences (if not their mode of action) comes from New Scientist. (2). Water extracted from both healthy and tumorous human tissue, was investigated by the physical witchcraft of 'nuclear magnetic resonance'. It was found that in the hydrogen nucleus, of four basic parameters measured, one was consistently different between the two water samples . Cause and effect (ie. water causes tumor, or tumor influences water) were not surmised upon."

The sort of 'odd properties' that sprang to our minds were widely different: for example the observation that at 'miracle' or Holy centres, like Lourdes, or the Ganges at Rishikesh, whether or not you credit some paranormal healing, the fact exists that thousands of sufferers of contageous diseases bath in the same water as others of a weak and suseptable condition, and yet the incidence of transmission of disease is quite significantly low. The other extreme is the thesis held by Dan Butcher and others, of the symbolic nature of water in experiences of paranormal phenomena. (3). As far as we know there has been no detailed examination of possible correlations on this subject.

The problems facing scientists of 'the traditional viewpoint' (as Phil put it) were more poignantly delineated in an earlier piece in New Scientist (4) which explained the work of Prof. FA Brown into the 'biological clocks' of various organisms. He took random samples of dried beans; weighed them before and after a four hour soaking in water; and correlated the data on 8000 samples, to judge the rates of absorption of water. There was an immediate, unexpected yet clear correlation with the quarter phases of the moon, the peak up-takes of water occurring at these times. A staff writer on NS was moved to encapsulate the dilemma: "It seems quite inconceivable that any type of internal 'biological clock' so far envisaged could possibly continue to tick away in anything so biochemically inert as a dry bean seed." And yet it does - or water activates it - or water, somehow and mysteriously, is its transformer or amplifier. But Brown doesn't stop there - he believes that before long, a quarter lunar rythmn will be found in plants and animals widely.

In the field of Physical Chemistry, there appears to have been some sporadic interest at various times in what a commentator calls: "The alleged possibility of producing mysterious changes in the physical properties of water by the application of relatively weak magnetic fields." (5). Following this statement there is an account of an experiment of pushing water through a weak field and the subsequent claims that this altered the pH of the water; its surface tension and dielectric properties - and then a classic and meticulous "null experiment" that proved that nothing happened. Reminds me of a dictum of Dr Jack Cohen's: "For every expert, there's an equal and opposite expert."

But now as we move on, the matter gets more interesting for us Forteans. I quote from the writer in NATURE: "It seems that for a considerable time boiler engineers in many parts of the world have been passing feed-water through quite mild magnetic fields and obtaining a sensational reduction in the adhesion of scale. Some accounts claim that the passage of feed-water through the field of a small bar-magnet will actually lead to removal of scale already deposited. When I took this to a wise and experienced physical chemist, his reaction was that this was nothing to some of the almost magical practices resorted to by boiler engineers. For instance, had I heard of the use of glass globes filled with helium and a little mercury (a Tonisator) tethered in the water supply, and said to be almost as effective as the magnetic system?" (6).

It's beginning to sound more improbable - ah! but more exciting. Alchemy in the waterworks - we expect to hear soon of a lucky-pixie charm in a reactor core. The vigorously proselytizing editorials of John W Campbell (editor of Analog SF) in the sixties who took every opportunity he could to point out that while physicists argued whether dowsing existed or not, down-to-earth water departments and farmers the world over used dowsers in their daily routine work, and to practical advantage most of the time. This he said showed the relative values to be placed upon Science and Technology - the latter making practical use of phenomena without any necessity of understanding the hows or whys. But again, we seem to be talking of a curious property of water - read the literature for discussions on fields and emanations from dowser and water, and resonances between the two.

But back to the NATURE article where we find that some Russian work claims other results of the weak-field magnetic processing of water: optical absorption altered up to 30%, and recovery to a normal condition varying length of treatment and strength of field. What next? - well, the question that if this is going on in neat water, what about consequent effects on water within an organism? It seems there are some known re-

actions to magnetic fields but these are so weak, elusive,(and poorly documented). Mice show no ill effects from a few hours at 150,000 oersted, and men have been exposed to 20,000 oersted for at least a quarter of an hour without screaming to be let out. Work is mentioned onthe magnetic susceptibility of (good ole) Drosophila, photobacteria, and mud snails, etc but controversy rages over inconclusive results. Does bird, or mud snail for that matter, navigation work insidiously through some way of monitoring changes in its bodily water, which in turn responds to geomagnetic and lunar fluctuations? (What was the question again?). Well scientists continue to vacillate; fields continue to fluctuate; and the boiler engineers continue to extemporate. There isn't much else to be said.

1) 'Mysterious Unknown.' - R. Charroux. Corgi.1973
'Supernature' - L Watson. Doubleday. 1973.
2) New Scientist, V62, No.669. 13 June 74. p902.
3)'Water Symbolism in UFO encounters' - D Butcher Surrey Investigation Group on Aerial Phenomena. 1971.
4) New Scientist, 18 April 74. p111.
5) Nature, V248, April 26, 1974. p729. News and Views.

swarms

We'll have a few more notes on swarms of insects - we even have some on mice and frog plagues, but these will have to keep until next time. Please see Mark Hall's column (this issue) for other swarmings including a huge deluge of caterpillars in Manitoba.

13 Oct 67 - Thurnby Lodge housing estate, Leicester, invaded by "millions" of harmless money-spiders. Houses and cars covered with webs and number estimated at 2 million per acre. "It was eerie...like something from Outer Space," said a resident. Daily Mirror, 14 Oct 67.

16 Aug 71 - Great Yarmouth, Norfolk. Swarms of ladybirds invading the beaches, forcing holiday-makers to quit during the brightest weather for months. Observers said: "The sky was grey with millions of them." Roads were carpeted with bodies and swimming pools soon collected layers. A change in the wind is said to have cleared them away, but no comment on where they came from or where they went, until suddenly people were confronted by 'millions'. Express & Star, 17 Aug 71. Credit for above two: Anthony Smith.

28 Sept 73 - swarms of crane-flies roaming the West Country. No note on numbers, but sufficient to "worry" pest-control officers. Daily Express.

31 Jan 74 - Newlyn, Cornwall. Mild weather is believed to have brought the plague of flies currently pestering the village. They are thought to have hatched out from seaweed in the harbour. "Millions" are blackening the seawall and many houses. Daily Telegraph.

A CATERPILLAR CRAWLED IN BERKELEY SQUARE.

The following three items are from successive weeks in the Sunday Times - we print the initial report (by David Blundy) in full because it contains much interesting incidental information.

BERKELEY SQUARE, London, where a nightingale is traditionally supposed to sing, has recently been alive to the sinister rustling sound of 100,000 caterpillars. The plague of caterpillars, or "pestilence of caterpillars" as Westminster City Council calls it, began two weeks ago. Thousands of the small furry creatures dropped 40ft from the square's plane trees.

Some dropped on to passers-by. Others fell on to the statue of the topless Greek lady with a pitcher standing at the southern end of the square, the gift, according to the plinth, of Henry, 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne.

The caterpillars made straight for the statue and formed a thick carpet over her pitcher, face and the more intimate parts of her torso. Other caterpillars disported on the grass, climbed on to the ornate pagoda in the centre of the square, and sat on the benches.

The reason for this sudden descent on Berkeley Square is still a mystery. Why not St James's Park or Clapham Common where there are more trees to defoliate? "They may have been attracted to Berkeley Square by the street lights," said Robert Humphreys, the head keeper of London Zoo's insect house. "But who knows? Who can tell?"

One man who wishes the caterpillars had chosen some other trees to plague is Berkeley Square's chief gardner and caretaker, Raymond Osborne, who has been waging a one-man battle against the insects. So far, he is losing.

"I go round and clear them off the seats," he says. "An hour later, hundreds of the little buggers are back again ,performing on the benches. I always have a good look before I sit down now, but some of the visitors just plonk down on the benches. A few minutes later, they start scratching and fidgeting around."

Mr Osborne says some people, including his assistant John, are allergic to caterpillars. 'John has been in a bad way. If they touch him, he get a red rash all over his body. It lasts for a day."

The caterpillars, a common British species which change eventually into Lackty moths, are, according to Mr Humphrys, completely harmless. Unless, of course, you are allergic to them.

He says the Lackey is particular about the places it plagues. It likes the southern parts of England and dislikes the industrial North. It breeds in the south of Ireland but never appears in Northern Ireland. Last year, it caused a pestilence in Hertford, Ware and Bury.

The Lackey, about half an inch long ,comes in tasteful hues of brown and achre and has four stylish tufts of white bristles on its back. Its only claim to fame in the insect world is that it builds little communal tents in the branches of trees where is breeds and prospers.

But Westminster City Council's infestation department is not concerned with the Lackey's pleasant life-style. "Our department has been working on the problem of how to exterminate this pest," the council's information officer said, yesterday. The problem is that liquid sprays are like water off a Lackey's back. DDT would be effective but could also damage residents of Berkeley Square and passers-by.

Other more extreme methods have been used in the past to deal with caterpillar plagues. When Brown Tailed moth caterpillars, said to be as big as a man's finger, terrorised the village of Telscombe, near Brighton in 1953, the local council brought out flame-throwers to exterminate them.

Westminster City Council says that it still has a few tricks up its sleeve. "We are working on a few techniques which should be brought into effect next week," said the information officer. "Our infestation officers are confident."

But Mr. Osborne, the gardener, who knows the Lackey only too well, says nature will take its course. "They're not so lively today. They're lying very still. I think they're about to turn into moths. The point is—the more you mess around with them, the longer they take."

2. CREEPING TO SCHOOL.

I WAS much interested in David Blundy's article on the current caterpillar plague in Berkeley Square (News, last week) but amazed at the implication that the phenomenon is something new.

Twenty years ago I used to trot unwillingly to my primary school near Park Lane, and term-time was made tolerable in summer only by the wonderful caterpillar invasion. From the moment I noticed the articulated armies on the march, my work began.

Starting at the East entrance of Berkeley Square and radiating zeal, I'd approach every unsuspecting person who happened to have taken a seat and inform them in portentous tones that they were being crawled on by thousands of furry feet. Ladies got up particularly smartly. Gentlemen tended to check first before leaping to their feet, but would then humbly ask me to brush them down with my beret.

My public-spirited duties ensured that I missed at least the first half-hour of morning and afternoon school every day, and on top of that came the gratifying bonuses I received—the sixpences pressed into my unflinching palm by palpitating elderly women and the bruising pinches administered by grateful galvanised businessmen.

The autumnal defection of the caterpillars was a yearly catastrophe to which I never adjusted. Warning people about wet paint just wasn't the same.— (Mrs) Alida Baxter, London W1.

3. WRONG PLAGUE.

THE CATERPILLARS which have recently appeared in Berkeley Square are not those of the Lackey moth, as reported by David Blundy (News, July 14), but those of the Vapourer moth.

The Lackey caterpillars are hairy but do not have the tufts of hair resembling horns possessed by Vapourers. The characteristic appearance of the Vapourer caterpillars is clearly visible in your photographs.

I saw only Vapourer caterpillars in Berkeley Square a week ago. Incidentally Richard South, in his "The Moths of the British Isles," first published in 1907, describes the Vapourer as "quite a Cockney insect, and is found in almost every part of the Metropolis where there are a few trees."—**Denys L Coomber**, London N20.

Kelvin Brodie

Plagued with caterpillars, the marquis's shapely statue

1) Sunday Times, 14 July 74. 2) Sunday Times, 21 July 74; Letter to Editor. 3) Sunday Times, 28 July 74; Letters to Editor. Credit: Steve Moore, Leslie Shepard.

* * *

did you see...?

'Astronomical Alignment of the Big Horn Medicine Wheel: Cairns of an Unexplained Amerindian Rock Pattern appear to have been Aligned to the Summer Solstice.' John A Eddy. SCIENCE Vol.184 pp1035 ff. 7 June 74. (A 25 metre diameter ring of small stones in the Big Horn range, Wyoming, with a central cairn and spokes. Other cairns give the alignments. Snow is common in summer and it's inaccessible in winter solstice time. Local Indians did not know of its purpose or who built it. Dating by artifacts found there suggest a date of 1700 AD. Quite recent for such a structure.)

EXORCISM - a Tatler Special, Spring 74. 32 pages of chilling True Exorcist tales. Much of interest

'The Return of Superstition.' editorial by Frank B Salisbury. BIOSCIENCE Vol.24 No4 p201. April 74.

'Bill Roll isn't scared of Ghosts.' NR Kleinfield WALL STREET JOURNAL pp1,12. 7 Jan 74. (About the director of the Psychical Research Foundation.)

'Alaska's Snowman lives.' Leo Hannan. ALASKA magazine May 74.

'Geller Performs for Physicists.' Jack Sarfatt. SCIENCE NEWS Vol.106 p46. 20 July 74.

'Uri through the Lens-Cap.' Yale Joel. p75,77,135. 'The Making of a Psychic.' Charles Reynolds. p73, 74,76, 136-138,174. Both from POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHY June 74.

The link between UFOs and Bigfoot'. P Gutilla & BA Slate. SAGA magazine Aug 74 pp16-18,54,56-58, 60.

'Midwinter Sunrise at Newgrange'. J Patrick. NATURE Vol.249 pp517-519. 7 June 74.

'Do Black Holes really Explode.' PCW Davies & JG Taylor. NATURE Vol.250 pp37-38. 5 July 74.

'Correlation of Long Delayed Radio Echoes and the Moon's Orbit' George Sassoon. SPACEFLIGHT Vol.16 pp258-264. July 74. (Is Earth being probed from Outer Space, etc?)

'Von Daniken's Express.' Mike Bygrave. CLUB INTERNATIONAL Vol.3 No7. pp4,6. July 74. (The lowdown on the 'Gold of the Gods' Caper. Is it a hoax?)

'Mathematical Games' SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN pp116-121. June 74. Martin 'Fads and Fallacies In the Name of Science' Gardner applies his cool and erudite mind to extrapolations of pyramid numerology.)

'The New Frontier.' Alfred Douglas. PREDICTION magazine pp16-18. Aug 74. (Report on a conference on fringe medicine; doctors & psychics battling it out.)

'Beyond Human Understanding.' Jillie Collins. WOMAN'S OWN 22 June 74, pp30-32. (Yes, folks! They finally made it to the NEWS. A collection of'true psychic happenings involving people's pets - and some weird ones at that, happenings that is. Next issue: 'Why does Biffo wear red braces?' from the BEANO.)

'Mystery of Lost Atlantis.' Richard Tate. FATE & FORTUNE No4. pp44-48. (Some interesting illos.)

THE LEY HUNTER No56/57 June/July (now bi-monthly) 'An unobtrusive Divining Rod' Sid Birchby. pp10,11 'UFOs in NE England', some reports. p12.

'Chaos or Cosmos?' Dr Arthur Peacocke. NEW SCIENTIST Vol.63 No910, pp386-389. 15 Aug 74. (Half time score in the match between Science and Religion, with God and Chance as bat and ball.)

'The Place of Astronomy in the Ancient World.' PHILOSOPHICAL TRANSACTIONS (of the Royal Society, London) Series A, Vol.276. pp1-276. (A mass of papers on ancient astronomy. Includes Thom on European monuments; a re-evaluation of the megalithic yard; Hawkins on British, Egyptian & Peruvian alignments, (evidence for non-alignments in Nazca figures.)

'Electricity as Free as Moonrock was Free.' Arthur Hill. HOUSTON (Texas) Chronicle 17 April 74, 5/p3. (In these energy-conscious days its nice to see a re-evaluation of the ideas of those whom orthodox science has been ready to junk as 'crackpot inventors'. Here, Loomis's 'Static Electric Motor' is given a whirl by West Virginia University; and the title refers cryptically to the economics of Loomis's method of 'concentrating electricity out of the air' - its there all right, but its going to cost you to get at it. Nows the time to dig out that old Keely Motor Co. stock your dad left you - if he didn't burn it, or put it to practical use in the john.)

'Scientist leaves Mind open to Psychic Mysteries! Terry Kliewer. DALLAS (Texas) MORNING NEWS, 37A, 17 March 74. (Interview with Sir John Eccles. Asked about scientists reducing 'self-awareness' to the discharge between brain cells, he "snorts: "Some philosophers want nice, neat philosophies with no loose ends. This is the ultimate illusion. The way to wisdom is to realise how much we don't know."

FLYING SAUCER REVIEW, Vol20. No1. July 74. Many interesting items including: 'Time Correlations between Geomagnetic Disturbances and Eye-witness Accounts of UFOs' by C Poher; 'Birthplaces of Prominent People in relation to BAVIC' by JC Dufour; & 'UFOs in Folklore' by Janet Bord.

INFO JOURNAL No.13. - Vol.IV, No.1. May 74. 'If You go down to the Woods Today' by RJM Rickard on a decade of mystery animal reports in southern England; 'Extraterrestials and the Tropical Zones BY Stuart Greenwood; 'Adgy?' by X, on Tunguska Event theories; 'The Stanford "Appors" Rediscovered' by Loren Coleman; 'Historical Miscellanies' by Ron Dobbins; and other items. Not to be missed.

'Healers - or Hoaxers.' Mark Frankland on the Philipino psycic-surgeons. OBSERVER COLOUR MAGAZINE, 25 August 74.

CAVEAT EMPTOR - May/June 74, No13. A UFO orientated American bi-monthly with some Fortean interests. Contributers include: Jerome Eden, Richard Shaver and Brinslay Le Poer Trench. 75¢ each or $4.00 for 6 issues to Nexus Enterprises, Box 688, Coatesville, Pa 19320, USA.

'Prepare to Avoid thy Doom.' a report by Ian Pollock, on the Psychic Research Centre, May Lectures at which whoever is who in the psychic research world tells of the strange things they've found. TIME OUT, June 21-27, 74; pp 12, 13 & 15.

'And yet it moves.' - Dr Colin West on the amazing (simple, effective & unexploited) Fluidyne chemical engine. NEW SCIENTIST 19 Aug 74, p530/1.

Compilation Credits: Mark Hall, Steve Moore, and Phil Ledger.

BOOKS RECEIVED: 'Reflexive Water - The basic concerns of Mankind' - philosophy discussions edited by Fons Elders; Souvenir Press.
'Flying Saucer Vision' - a welcome Abacus paper edition of John Michell's trail-blazing classic.
Due to shortage of room we will have to review these books later, probably next issue.

GREAT FORTEAN CAPER/ Cont.

Are we fished for? Are we really property? The only moral in this seems to be the Kafkaesque one that speculations on the end-goal are useless - the journeying is all the reality there is. In fact the last words of the play, said while our two main heroes are laughing in the rain (of an edible lichen), are: "There's a whole new caper coming."

THE BOOK OF BHRIGU - AN ENIGMA.

A key scene in the play concerns a prophecy in an ancient Hindu text called the 'Book of Bhrigu' that the main protagonists will meet in a certain place and a certain time. Like me, you will probably never have heard of this oracle - and be otherwise inclined to place it on the same shelf as the Necronomicon (of the mad Arab, Abdul Al' Hazred). Ken assured me it did exist, and gave me an obscure pamphlet which tells how an American Hindu monk, styled Kriyananda, was brought to meet this literary incarnation of the ancient rishi, Bhrigu. (1).

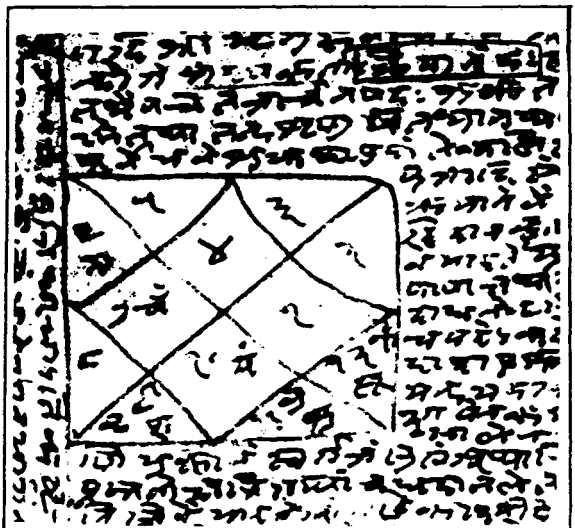
The 'Bhrgu Samhita' as it is more properly known, is tied into bundles of loose pages - and all over India there are pandits or interpreters who have a few bundles of Bhrigu in their care. No one seems to know how many bundles there are, but some are undoubtedly fakes. The pages, said to contain details of "millions of lives" are indexed by horoscope, drawn up for the precise time of consultation, which is a pretty neat idea. Even details of past are given, and the story is related of a woman told by Bhrigu that in a previous life she lived in 'Patel-Desh' (a footnote explains that this term appears often in old Sanskrit and is generally taken to mean 'America), in the town of Washinton (this name being spelled phonetically in Sanskrit characters). My first reaction was to wonder what are ancient Sanskrit books doing with references to America, for Heaven's sake. The original Bhrgu Samhita is said to be hidden in Tibet - the existing 'volumes' being copied meticulously by hand. Kriyananda managed to get one page dated to about 150 years old at the Archeological Dept. of India's National Arch-

ives. Though that does not prove much about the antiquity of the textural tradition, either way.

There is an immediately apparant distinction to Nostradamus's cryptic quatrains - 'Bhrigu' is said to contain quite specific prophecies, up to two pages long, detailing names, birth-places, the precise reason for the consultation and very often a precise answer. And all this across an unknown number of centuries. Its reputed infallibility gives rise to some fascinating ledgends:

> "I learned of one man who was told in a portion of the Bhrigu Samhita in Banaras that five years later he would die. He lived in dread of that day. After fives years had passed, he was still very much alive. He had lost all faith in Bhrigu. Much later, he happened upon a portion of the Samhita elsewhere. On impulse he decided to ask Bhrigu why the Banaras prediction had failed. A reading was found for him. Therein he was told that at the time his previous reading was copied, a line had accidentally been left off the top of a letter. As a result the meaning was changed completely. What Bhrigu originally intended was that after five years this person would lose all his property." (1)

And indeed, that was said to have been what actually happened.



A copy of part of the page referring to Kriyananda's consultation, from the Bhṛgu Samhita, showing the horoscope, and his name (circled) in Sanskrit characters.

The original Bhṛgu seems to have been a mythical characterer in the Rig Veda; and a Bhṛgu is mentioned as one of 28 'Yogacaryas' (founders of the mainstream of yoga philosophies) in the Siva-Mahapurana. The Purana Index (2) lists no less than 9 Bhṛgus. It seems certain that a group or cult of priests (following the eponymous Bhṛgu), and worshippers of the fire-god Agni, later evolved into a real family. One researcher Kriyananda met said the Samhita was not written by Bhrigu but by succeeding groups of highly trained pandits, on the basis of an accurate astrological science formulated by the original Bhṛgu. I searched both the Purana and Vedic Indexes but no mention could I find of the Samhita; perhaps it is later. Perhaps it doesn't exist. Or perhaps it is a victim of scientific banishment. This would make a nice project for someone. We remain critical, but realise its value, if it proves to exist and check out satisfactorily. If anyone picks this up - please keep in touch.

1) 'The Book of Bhrigu.' by Kriyananda. Hansa Publications, San Francisco. 1967.

2) 'The Purana Index' (Vol II.) VRR Dikshitar. University of Madras. 1952.

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And don't forget to mention THE NEWS.

UFO LECTURE.

Nigel Watson writes that Norman Oliver will be giving a talk to the Scunthorpe UFO Research Society (SUFORS) on 'British Contact Claims' on Monday 7th October. Anyone interested further is invited to write to Nigel Watson at 1 Angerstein Road, Scunthorpe, Lincs, DN17 2LZ.

NEXT NEWS will include: William Corliss on the genesis of the Sourcebook Project; Janet Bord on Leys, Black Dogs and a phantom cottage; more spontaneous combustions (?); a whole heap (a spook?) of ghosts; and a couple of ball-lightning things. What more could you want? What? - a possession or two? Well, OK - but it scares the life out of me typing that kind of weird stuff. Wait! What's that? Good god...the doorhandle is moving..

Mr and Mrs Wildsmith of Pinner, Middlesex, look forlornly at their new car restyled by the impact of an 18-inch lump of ice from the sky in March 1974. See FT6:11.